Gypsy Identities 1500–2000

From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany

David Mayall

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Gypsies have lived in England since the early sixteenth century, yet considerable confusion and disagreement remain over the precise identity of the group. The question 'Who are the Gypsies?' is still asked and the debates about the positioning and permanence of the boundary between Gypsy and non-Gypsy are contested as fiercely today as at any time before.

This study locates these debates in their historical perspective, tracing the origins and reproduction of the various ways of defining and representing the Gypsy from the early sixteenth century to the present day. Starting with a consideration of the early modern description of Gypsies as Egyptians, land pirates and vagabonds, the volume goes on to examine the racial classification of the nineteenth century and the emergence of the ethnic Gypsy in the twentieth century. The book closes with an exploration of the long-lasting image of the group as vagrant and parasitic nuisances which spans the whole period from 1500 to 2000.

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Preface

Gypsies have lived continuously in England since the early sixteenth century and yet, even today, there is still considerable confusion and disagreement over the precise identity of the group. The first question asked of anyone undertaking research into the Gypsies is 'Who do you mean by Gypsy?' Behind this enquiry is a desire to define the group, fix the boundaries and find reassurances for the preconceptions which exist in the questioner's mind. But the reason the question has to be asked in the first place is precisely because so many different definitions and representations of the group compete with each other in contemporary society. The answer is neither simple nor easy, raising as it does issues of representation, perception, classification and criteria for group formation. As a result, the debates about where the boundary between Gypsy and non-Gypsy should be drawn, and whether the division is permanent or fluid, are argued as fiercely today as at any time. As with any minority group, the issue of identity is a critical feature of group relations and responses, and boundaries, labels and stereotypes are rarely constant or consistent. The conflicts and confusion which surround the specific case of Gypsy identity are both long lasting and seemingly unresolveable. My concern is with how the people, their origins and behaviour, culture and way of life are presented and constructed. This incorporates views on the Gypsy 'essence' and what it is that defines and makes a Gypsy. The focus is thus on the 'Other' at home, the 'outsider' inside the nation, and how knowledge, information and, importantly, misinformation about the group emerge and gain credibility and acceptance.

This study covers a long historical period, touches on the work of specialists from other disciplines and deals with themes and concepts about which there is an extensive literature. It would be a mistake to claim that this study does justice to any of these, but, equally, it is important they are not neglected. To ignore the wider issues about identity and classification would again leave Gypsy studies isolated in its concerns and relevance. The study of Gypsies has for too long basked in comfortable but obscure backwaters and it is important that this group is brought into the wider discussions about representation, race thinking, ethnic classification and constructed identity. Although the focus of this study is on the varied nature of the English Gypsy identity, a similar story could be told about any national Gypsy population. Further, it should be emphasised that Gypsies are

in effect a case study of the wider processes of the formation, construction and reproduction of group boundaries, labels and identities.

It is often stated that the *gaujo,* or non-Gypsy, representations of Gypsies are unremittingly negative. While this hostile impression of Gypsies exists, and is perhaps even a dominant view, other images also can be found, including the romanticised, the positive racial and the ethnic. It is important to avoid generalising about how Gypsies are represented and treated as there is no single image or response and there have always been overlapping, contradictory and ambiguous images and reactions. The aim of this study is, then, to locate the debates about identity in their historical perspective, tracing the origins of the various systems of defining, representing and labelling the Gypsy, and their reproduction over time. Chapter 1 provides a survey of the controversy about Gypsy identity and highlights the contradictions which can serve to further complicate an already difficult area. Chapter 2 locates the debates about Gypsy identity within the analytical framework provided by notions of social construction and representations of the Other. Also it will consider ways in which group identities are produced and reproduced in various forms and over time. Chapter 3 focuses on the early modern period, broadly covering the period from the early sixteenth to the late seventeenth centuries, and the shift from a view of Gypsies as strangers and Egyptians to a definition which identified them as simply one part of a wider vagrant and nomadic population. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 take the racial definition as their main theme. Chapter 4 provides the context for the discussion by considering the origins and meaning of the racial classification, before moving on, in Chapter 5, to consider the meaning and implications of this in relation to the Gypsy group. Chapter 6 considers some of the key sources for the representation of the racial Gypsy, covering such writers as the German scholar Heinrich Grellmann, the writer George Borrow and the Gypsy lorists. Chapter 7 provides a survey of ethnicity as a system of classification as background to its application to Gypsies, and the eventual adoption of the ethnic definition by the British state and its expression in the Gypsy political organisations which began to emerge in the 1960s. Chapter 8 reviews the differing versions of the ethnic Gypsy to be found in a number of recent texts. The final definition of the Gypsy as nomad and vagrant, which first emerged in the early modern period and is still widely accepted today, is considered in Chapter 9.

My own interest in the Gypsy population first started many years ago and, like anyone researching the group, I found the enormous variety of sources and literature both heaven-sent riches and an intimidating nightmare in size, scope and diversity Unfortunately, to borrow a well-known metaphor, I have only been able to fish in a relatively small part of this bottomless ocean. The period and range of themes covered in this study mean that there will inevitably be areas which deserved full-length discussion in their own right. I will have to leave that task for others or for another time.

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1
The different faces of the Gypsy

Who are the Gypsies?

The word ‘Gypsy’ conjures up in the minds of outsiders or non-Gypsies a range of evocative, and perhaps even provocative, images of the people and their way of life. Alongside the familiar bewitching and alluring Gypsy maiden, with fiery eyes and a passionate spirit, sits the fortune telling hag. For some the nomadic Gypsy lifestyle evokes the romance of the open road and an *al fresco* life free from the restrictions and inhibitions of settled society. For others, Gypsies, itinerancy and itinerants go hand in hand with criminality, parasitism and deceit, with the nomadic Gypsy strangers appearing as a threat and danger to health, property and person. The cartoon representation of Gypsies as ‘lying, thieving, dirty bastards’, which appeared in the youth magazine *Viz,* is neither unfamiliar nor atypical, though in most other instances this image comes with intended malice rather than satire.

This imagery associated with the label ‘Gypsy’ can be extended to common representations of their encampments. If we take our perspective on Gypsies from the paintings of Augustus John, the fiction of D.H.Lawrence, the poetry of John Clare, or the writings of the very prolific and influential Gypsy lorists and Romany Rais, or Gypsy Gentlemen, the picture is invariably backlit by a rural setting.1 The sun shines over the small encampment, hidden from sight in secluded woodland, where one of a group of dark-skinned adults and children is carefully crafting a clothes-peg from cut wood and scrap tin. A gaily dressed woman with dark hair, piercing bright eyes, and wearing dangly earrings and a bright headscarf is preparing a meal over an open fire. A group of children play happily nearby while their horses graze contentedly alongside the bow-topped caravan. The visitor to the camp is greeted warmly and invited to share a meal of baked hedgehog and an evening of hospitality and conversation with the group. The picture is of the romantic, free-living and free-loving Romanies: a dark, mysterious people living in dingly dells and following a natural, rural way of life, in communion with Nature, and unchanged over time. The group are seen as a race of people separate from the native-born inhabitants, whether settled or itinerant, leading a rich and exciting life. It is an image in which harmony and

order dominate, with the Gypsy seen as a welcome anomaly and anachronism in modern society.

If, however, our opinions on the group are formed by reading the correspondence columns of virtually any provincial newspaper, feature articles in the tabloid press, evidence given before House of Lords Select Committees, or the writings of George Smith of Coalville, the crusading Victorian reformer of canal dwellers, brickyard children and Gypsies, the picture takes on very different colours. Rickety vans, which have long since lost their wheels, and ragged dirty canvas tents are pitched on rubbish-strewn wasteland, lacking any water or sanitary facilities. Aggressive dogs prowl menacingly, and the children, all of school age, are either begging from strangers or fighting amongst themselves. The poorly dressed, ill-looking inhabitants treat the visitor, assumed to be a prying official or yet another missionary with conversion on his mind, with disdain and contempt. This second encampment is inhabited by the dirty, unwelcome, parasite Gypsies who lead a life which flagrantly and deliberately disregards the moral and legal codes of the day, and who obstinately refuse to pay taxes or educate their children.[2] Rather than being described as a separate race, this group is seen simply as outcast from society, a people living on the margins of criminality and at the bottom end of the class hierarchy. The sense of threat, nuisance, danger, conflict and confrontation runs throughout each element of this portrait.

Both these scenes will undoubtedly be familiar as common images of Gypsies and their encampments. Although they are composite pictures deliberately intended to illustrate the extremes of the views about the Gypsies and the different ways in which the label 'Gypsy' has been applied, they are not ones which have been simply invented, and can be found with little variation, a similar use of language and remarkable regularity in a range of both written and visual sources.

Given the contrasting and contradictory images of the Gypsy it is little wonder that the question 'Who are the Gypsies?' is asked as frequently today as at any time. John Cripps, in an opening paragraph of his 1977 report for the Department of the Environment on the operation of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, commented: 'What or who is a gypsy? The question has been put to me repeatedly by local authorities and others.'[3] Cripps was only repeating a question which has been asked on numerous occasions, by various outsiders, in a wide variety of contexts.[4] Recently the issue has been debated at academic conferences, through book reviews, at editorial meetings and in courts of law. The issue is, then, clearly of interest to a diverse and enquiring audience. Moreover, it should not be assumed that this is an exclusively English or even British concern. Precisely the same disagreements and questions over how to define and represent the group have been repeated wherever and whenever the Gypsies have had a presence.[5]

The question is often used primarily as a rhetorical device to unravel the complexity of Gypsy identity by confirming one definition at the expense of all others. This results in those beyond the pale of the in-group being seen as

somehow not real or counterfeit. The answer provided offers the promise of separating what is seen as the myth from the reality and of providing a precise definition which distances the Gypsy from all impostors and others with whom they could be confused for reasons of lifestyle or appearance. The purpose of the question is therefore not to open the debate, but rather to firmly close it. This provides the starting point for this study, which aims at pushing open the debating door and challenging the assumptions contained in the myth/reality paradigm of the existence of fact and fiction, truths and lies. Essentially, my aim is not to establish a right or wrong answer to the question but to understand the origins and rationale for what can be seen instead as the alternative constructions of Gypsy identity, each with their own element of myth-making. Instead of simply trying to provide an answer to the question, or even merely looking at the various answers given, my purpose is to look at who is asking the question, and why, and to consider the context and intentions of those providing the answers. This work is less concerned with the Gypsies themselves than with the way they have been defined and portrayed, most commonly by outsiders but also by themselves. The focus, therefore, is with the processes of group formation, labelling, boundary-making and stereotyping.

All the representations, or faces, of the Gypsy are in one way real: Gypsies are who the writer or speaker thinks they are. All have meanings, all have boundaries, and all have labels and images. Gypsies are who you want them to be in the sense that confirmation can be found in various sources for the definition which best suits a purpose. Moreover, if the purpose changes and the ground shifts, then definitions can be, and have been, changed. However, it is precisely this apparent legitimacy of each of the Gypsy identities that is the cause of considerable controversy and which has such an important bearing on how Gypsies are situated in the dominant, non-Gypsy society.

The variable answers to the question ‘Who are the Gypsies?’ has inevitably meant that this has become the subject of heated and volatile debate, where differences of opinion turn into personal, political and legal battles, with those wishing to confirm a separate racial or ethnic identity being confronted by those equally determined to deny it. One of the important arenas for the debate has been amongst academics and Gypsiologists, or Gypsy specialists. At a conference held at the University of Leiden in September 1990 the workshop sessions on the ‘minorisation’ of travelling groups returned repeatedly to the issue of Gypsy identity and the significance or otherwise of origins. Here the simmering disagreements erupted into the open and splits among scholars were only too apparent. Essentially it is now possible to identify two clearly defined and antagonistic camps, albeit with some stragglers wavering between the two. On the one side are those arguing for the ethnic definition and on the other those favouring a sociohistorical approach.

The ferocity and significance of the divisions have led to accusations of misrepresentation and censorship, scathing academic reviews, bitter pre-publication exchanges, and to a situation where prejudice and whim can overcome

objectivity and experience. Judith Okely, social anthropologist and author of the major and influential study *The Traveller Gypsies,* has, in her opinion, been falsely represented and her work has been turned against Gypsies by lawyers keen to use, or misuse, her arguments about indigenous origins in order to deny the group an ethnic identity.[6] The strength of feeling within the scholarly community is also indicated by the uncompromising criticism her work received in a respected academic journal.[7] Differences of opinion concerning how the Gypsies should be defined and represented were also to be found among the members of the International Group for the Study of Gypsy History. In commissioning and editing work for publication it was apparent that this collection of academics, freelance writers, teachers and Gypsy activists shared a scholarly interest in the group but held widely divergent views on the critical questions of identity and origins.[8]

Outside the more rarefied academic atmosphere, and of greater significance because of the implications for policy and the place of Gypsies in wider society, are the debates conducted in the law courts. Indeed it is the treatment of Gypsies in law that provides the clearest instance of how responses and category definitions are inextricably connected. The need to define, redefine, group and separate the various itinerant groups has been a continuous feature of the state's legislative response to nomadism. The history of the official reaction consists of a long struggle to distinguish, for purposes of persecution or exemption, the alien from the indigenous nomad, the unrespectable vagrant from the respectable tramping artisan, the criminals from the traders and the temporary nomads from those for whom nomadism was a way of life. When defined under the all-encompassing vagrant category the Gypsy was being identified so that the full force of anti-vagrant legislation could be directed against him. When they were defined as an ethnic group, Gypsy cultural traditions and the nomadic way of life were to some extent acknowledged and accepted, whilst the group was also identified as deserving protection from racial discrimination.

The minutes of the proceedings of the House of Lords Committees in 1909 and 1910, convened to consider the proposals for legislation governing moveable dwellings, reveal how prejudice can become more influential in choosing from the alternatives than informed judgement and objective observation. In the long and tortuous history of the various efforts to see a Moveable Dwellings Bill through both Houses, the Committee members had first to battle against their own prejudices and pre-formed opinions, all too evident in the loaded questions put to the witnesses, and then to make sense of the conflicting accounts of the group presented to them. The 1910 Committee concluded, unsatisfactorily, that among the group of van dwellers there existed a 'showmen class' and a 'gipsy class'. Their intention was to separate the honest, respectable and well-to-do showmen, for whom no legislation was required, from the remainder, for whom it was. However, they did not rest with this simple division, remarking that within the 'gipsy class' 'some…of course, are not gipsies and many are not pure gipsies'.[9]

The conclusions of this Committee are just one example of the official confusion and prejudice that has led, in England, to the statutory definition of the Gypsy taking so many twists and turns. From the sixteenth century to the present day there has been a shift in the legal status of Gypsies from alien immigrants to their grouping with vagrants and beggars, and from defining them with all others who pursued a nomadic way of life to granting them ethnic minority status. This is perhaps not too surprising given the changing context, composition of the group and priorities of the state over such an extended period. What is of concern, however, is that until the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act the state was working with two legislative definitions of the Gypsy. In 1988 the ruling that they constituted an ethnic group meant that, for the first time, Gypsies were given legal protection from discrimination under Race Relations legislation. This can be seen as a landmark in the official state response to, and definition of, the group. By permitting the group ethnic minority status, for the first time, the state opened the way for the full recognition of civil, legal and political rights for the group. However, this significant victory for the Gypsies, which is discussed more fully in chapter 7, was not won without a lengthy, expensive and bitter battle through the Law Courts and Court of Appeal.

At the same time as this ruling, however, the Gypsies continued to be denied a racial or ethnic identity under the definition provided in the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, where they were taken to be persons of a nomadic habit of life. The situation was further complicated by the arrival on the nomadic scene of the so-called New Age Travellers, who forced the issue of defining the Gypsy, and of state policy towards nomads, back into open debate and threw the legislators into another frenzy of redefinition. For New Age Travellers the key issue was whether or not they should be accepted as 'legitimate' nomads, echoing former investigations into the position of travellers in a sedentary-based society. More specifically, if they were accepted as being Gypsies, according to the definition provided in the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, then local authorities were legally obliged to provide them with site accommodation.[10] The government, under pressure from the National Gypsy Council, proposed an amendment to the 1968 definition in order to deny the New Age Travellers the label 'Gypsy' on the basis that most were first-generation converts to nomadism and did not share the ancestry or cultural practices associated with Gypsies, thereby relieving local authorities of their obligations.

In 1968, then, it was sufficient to define Gypsies simply by reference to their nomadic way of life. By 1988 the state also had to accept an ethnic definition for purposes of Race Relations legislation, and by 1993 the appearance of the New Age Travellers further exposed the inadequacies of the 1968 guidelines, requiring a third change to the statutory definition in twenty-five years. In the long legal history of the struggle to define the Gypsy, the situation in 1993 again showed confusion and inconsistency, and a willingness to change boundaries according to the specific needs of the moment.

Alternative faces of the Gypsy

So far we have briefly been introduced to two, alternative faces of the Gypsy. The first of these can be termed 'racial'. The 'race' of Gypsies, often referred to in the British experience as Romanies, 'real' Gypsies or 'true-blood' Gypsies, owe their separateness to their foreign, Indian origin and ancestry. This then provides the basis for a picture of the group which emphasises peculiar attitudes and behaviour, continuity in cultural practices, and obvious physical differences such as skin, hair and eye colour. In turn, physiological differences are explained by reference to heredity, thus establishing the principle of the permanence of these features. Also of central importance is their retention of a distinctive language with Indian roots, Romany, which is seen to match the significance of Judaism to Jews and as providing the essential bond of universal brotherhood.[11] Nomadism and an outdoor existence are usually seen as essential aspects of their culture and way of life, and by referring to the Gypsy 'instinct' for travelling, 'wanderlust', and the inability to remain within four walls the impression given is that the practice of nomadism is inherited and in the blood. Finally, this idea of a single race also allows the group a worldwide identity which unites Gypsies across all national borders. It is in this sense that the British Romanichals, the German Roma and Sinti, and the Vlach Rom have a shared identity based on common, foreign (Indian) origins and culture which transcend, but do not destroy, specific national identities.[12] The generally sympathetic response to this group is indicated by the tone, setting and language of the outside commentators and can be seen, by way of a typical example, in Kay Henwood's *Secrets of the Gypsies.* The title itself gives the first indication to the reader of the mystery and allure which surrounds the Gypsies, with the added promise that their secrets will be revealed if the reader presses on. In the opening pages Henwood talks of pure-bred Gypsies, originating from India, whose travelling is 'in their bones'. She continues, 'In the midst of our materialistic fast-moving twentieth century, they are amazingly loyal to their old traditions and ways of life, following occupations and customs originating over a thousand years ago.'[13] Having established a static continuity, she then builds a familiar picture of encampments on idyllic heaths with the members of the group squatting around open fires, feasting and drinking, telling stories, playing music, singing and dancing. Similar images which stress the beguiling and picturesque qualities of the group, evoking scenes of rural harmony and dreamy siestas, are commonplace in much of the writing on Gypsies to be found in a range of popular journals and magazines and also, importantly, among numerous Gypsy scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[14]

The second definition combines way of life with low socio-economic and social status and typically adopts the label 'gypsy', rather than Gypsy, Rom or Romany. The primary criterion for defining the group is not origins, whether foreign or indigenous, but a nomadic way of life which distinguishes travelling family groups pursuing itinerant occupations and living in moveable or semi-

permanent dwellings from the settled population. Nomadism is equated with gypsyism, and being a nomad with being a gypsy.

Although some variation was allowed within the group to accommodate differences in wealth, employment or religion, such a lifestyle was most commonly seen as the resort of social outcasts and dropouts. While the travelling population contained a respectable and deserving minority, the majority was typically portrayed as a criminal underclass and as impoverished, unproductive vagrants and parasites. The images are, then, invariably and almost unremit tingly negative, creating a sense of conflict, mistrust and antagonism between the settled and nomadic societies.

To these can be added two further and competing ethnic versions of Gypsy identity. The ethnic/racial classification, also referred to as the ethnocentric perspective, possesses the same essential features as the racial system but with some important differences. As with the racial definition, a similar emphasis is given to Indian origin, cultural distinctiveness and linguistic continuity. The issue of origin is indeed, in many instances, given priority in texts with the story of the Gypsy diaspora from northern India being established in the first chapters. But where this definition significantly moves from the racial is in its rejection of fixed and permanent differences, particularly in relation to physiological, mental and cultural attributes. It is also a definition which, while stressing the ethnic minority status of Gypsies and a transnational identity based on common origins, lifestyle, culture and experience, also permits diversity and difference within the group. A further and important element in this approach to Gypsy identity is to be found in the prominence given to the historical and contemporary oppression of the group, with full accounts given of persecution and victimisation across all continents and in every period. In this can be found another parallel with Jewish history and identity, where persistent harassment, and worse, is a key element in forming or cementing a sense of common history and purpose. This particular definition, with some differences in emphasis or nuance, can be found in the works of many contemporary Gypsiologists, and includes such academics and activists as Ian Hancock, Thomas Acton, Donald Kenrick and the late Angus Fraser.[15]

The final ‘face’ of the Gypsy can be termed the ethnic/cultural. This also holds to a belief in the ethnic identity of the Gypsy, but locates ethnicity not in foreign origins but in nomadic ancestry. In one sense this definition takes elements from both the ethnic/racial and the socio/economic outlined above, sharing with the former a belief in the cultural distinctiveness and ethnic status of the group and, with the latter, a similar emphasis on nomadism. The starting point for this definition is best provided by Judith Okely, usually identified, often by way of criticism, as its main proponent. She states, ‘no criterion interpreted from the outside provides a satisfactory method of identifying Gypsies, whether it be country of origin, race, language, occupation or general culture’.[16] Instead, believes Okely, the criteria for definition should come from the inside, from the Gypsies themselves. From this source she identifies nomadic descent as the

necessary condition for Gypsy identity, with secondary aspects in self-employment, knowledge of the group's language, an ideology of travelling, habitat, dress, cleanliness rituals, shared values, and an ideological separation between Gypsies and non-Gypsies.

Although reference to cultural difference and ideological separation creates some degree of overlap with the ethnic/racial classification, the key point of contention, and the point at which the two definitions radically diverge, remains that of origins. In contrast with the weight given to Indian origins by Kenrick and others, Okely suggests that 'place of origin has not seemed significant to Gypsies themselves'.[17] Inevitably this perspective is not shared by many Gypsiologists, and Angus Fraser, in a loosely disguised riposte, stated, 'one detects a good deal of suspicion on the part of some social anthropologists in regard to any emphasis on the Indian origins of Gypsies, and accusations of exoticism, romanticism or escapism are quick to fly'.[18]

Ambiguous and contradictory images

While the above schema implies that it is possible to work with a fourfold classification, leaving the outsider the freedom to pick that which seems most appropriate, the picture is in fact even more complicated, ambiguous and contradictory than this might suggest. The terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are used confusingly and often synonymously, and positive and negative images collide not only across specific definitional boundaries but also within them. It is reasonable to expect that some relief from this confusion in the use of boundaries and images could be found in the work of a particular author or the pages of a particular text or source. At the very least we would hope to find some degree of consistency and coherence in the fixing of boundaries, the application of labels and the images offered of the group. While this is the case with a number of texts, it is not true of all. The views of authors change over time and the use of labels and boundaries can vary even within the same text and from one paragraph to another with no explanatory comment from the author or any indication or recognition of incongruity and contradiction. A confusion of labels is applied to the group, usually without any clarification of the reasons for the preferred use of one alternative over another. References can be found to gypsies, Gypsies, Rom, Romany, Gypsy-travellers, Traveller-gypsies and Travellers, without any explanation how or if these labels refer to differently defined groups.

Although the categories 'race', 'racial group' and 'ethnic group' are commonly used in relation to Gypsies there is no general agreement over what they actually mean or how they should be applied.[19] It is not uncommon for the terms to be used as if they were interchangeable, resulting in a misleading and confusing application of classificatory concepts. In a recent unpublished paper by a respected author and prominent Gypsy activist reference was made to Romanies as a race of people, to Gypsies as nomads with a lifestyle similar to Romanies, to a further group called Romany Gypsies, and also to an ethnic group in Britain

known as Gypsies or Romanichals.[20] In the works of the previously mentioned George Smith of Coalville, writing in the late nineteenth century, remarks on 'real gipsies', 'gipsy birth and extraction', 'gipsy blood' and 'the Romany' were placed alongside his championing of a definition according to which Gypsies were described as persons of sedentary and native origins who simply followed an itinerant way of life.[21]

Similarly, as has been seen, both Judith Okely and Thomas Acton, two prominent Gypsy scholars, argue that the Gypsies constitute an ethnic group, but they disagree strongly over the basis of that ethnicity and the relative significance of Indian origins and nomadic ancestry. The concept of the ethnic Gypsy remains equally elusive in the writings of Jean-Pierre Liégeois, a leading Gypsy scholar and author of many studies of the group, and Willy Guy is surely correct to point to the theoretical confusion in the attempt to find definitive criteria for establishing ethnic identity.[22] Liégeois' work, some of which has been published by the Council of Europe for the overt pedagogic purpose of overcoming anti-Gypsy prejudice, offers a valuable and complex, though seemingly contradictory, explanation of who comprises the Gypsy group. To begin with, as indicated by the title of one of his studies, Liégeois makes the point of distinguishing between Gypsies and Travellers, though the ways in which they are distinct remain vague throughout. Liégeois appears to deny the importance of original foreign ancestry from India when he acknowledges that from the sixteenth century in Europe there was exchange, mixing and absorption between the travellers from the Indian continent and indigenous travellers. He writes:

> the distinction between Gypsies and Travellers is not always clear, and the question as to who is a Gypsy and who is a Traveller finds no answer and is of no relevance in certain contexts: intermediate groups may have formed long ago and continue to form.[23]

This passage is revealing for a number of reasons. First, he accepts that the attempt to differentiate the Gypsy from the Traveller is unclear and also irrelevant *in certain contexts,* though we are not informed of the contexts in which the distinction would be clear and relevant. He then moves on to the *possibility* that intermediate groups may have formed, leaving open to question whether they actually did or did not and the precise character of any such groups.[24] This particular definitional analysis runs very close to that of Judith Okely with its emphasis on nomadic ancestry and intermixing between foreign and indigenous travellers, but Liégeois takes it a step further. We are also told that Gypsies and Travellers form

> [a] mosaic of small groups of different kinds, a shifting mosaic, the pattern of which is constantly changing, a kaleidoscope in which each element retains its distinctive features. There can be no generalisations, then, when it comes to origin, history, language, habit or occupation.[25]

Elsewhere the mosaic pieces are referred to as ethnic fragments. This use of the mosaic imagery is entirely deliberate, and is intended to convey the diversity of the group of Gypsies and Travellers while still allowing for all the parts to come together, in the manner of a kaleidoscope, to form a coherent and unified whole. A picture is given of overall unity and a shared ethnicity apparently based on origin, language, social organisation, values, and a flexible, supple and adaptable organisation. Moreover, he suggests that a travelling way of life is of less importance than mental attitudes.[26] Liégeois' work is important for the sophisticated approach he brings to Gypsy studies, notably in highlighting the diversity and 'shifting universe' of the population and avoiding what he terms the 'irrelevancies' of origins. Equally, though, his attempts to restore an overall unity from the diversified mosaic become dependent on the confusing and unsatisfactory criteria of knowing and feeling.[27]

Liégeois' work is not alone in containing apparent inconsistencies, yet his studies take on additional significance by virtue of his prominence in the field of Gypsy writing and activism and by the fact that he is widely regarded as an expert on Gypsy matters.[28] Yet, even here, clarity on the vexed issue of Gypsy identity is not provided. The question of origin is recognised as of little relevance and yet the significance of an Indian-derived language and the use of linguistics in tracing origins and patterns of migration remain highlighted. The notion of mosaics, or sub-ethnicities, carries some appeal for the way that it allows additional or alternative identities to emerge within and between different national groupings of Gypsies. The less satisfying aspect, though, is the way that each of the separate ethnic groups are then brought together under a single ethnic umbrella which is assumed to take precedence over the former, but without any explanation of how this works or which ethnic features assume dominance. Conceptually, this is to move towards the idea that any individual, and indeed any one group, can have multiple identities. Whereas the majority of commentators are desperate to identify the Gypsy and focus on what makes the Gypsy separate and different from other travellers and impostors, Liégeois is surely correct when he states that this is an issue for which there is no clear answer, and, indeed, which is of no relevance in certain contexts. His attempt to highlight diversity, while leading towards some confusion regarding ethnicity, is not apparent in many other works, and his notion of the 'shifting universe' of the Gypsy, which is far removed from the unchanging Gypsy world of the lorists, points to the dynamism of group identities.

The complications concerning Gypsy identity are therefore numerous. Encyclopaedias and reference texts vary in their definitions and change over time, academics and Gypsiologists fail to agree over the basis of Gypsy identity, the state until recently found it acceptable to have two contrasting statutory definitions of the group, internal inconsistencies exist within one source and the works of particular authors, and race and ethnicity as classificatory systems are repeatedly conflated despite fundamental differences in their meanings. The label 'Gypsy' is used both as a generic term to apply to all nomads and travellers

and to refer to a distinct and separate group of Indian origins and ancestry. Even when agreement is reached concerning the fundamental criteria for differentiating Gypsies from non-Gypsies, whether origins, nomadism or ancestry, there are marked differences of opinion on the nature of secondary characteristics, such as language, behaviour, culture, beliefs and attitudes. At the basis of these differences, and the debates and even hostile exchanges which stem from them, are the fundamental disagreements concerning where and how the boundaries should be drawn around the group. In each of the versions it is possible to see the basic criteria of origins and nomadism being used in different ways, resulting in contrasting implications for the fluidity or fixedness of the boundary line between Gypsy and non-Gypsy and also for the subsidiary characteristics mentioned earlier.

Every text, implicitly or explicitly, carries a particular view on the origins, worldwide migrations and entry into Europe of the Gypsies, and much of the subsequent debate about where and how the boundary should be drawn between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, the precision with which the boundary can be established and the extent of its fluidity or permanence, emerges from this. The importance of this is indicated by the fact that in many texts a statement on origins forms the opening sentence. This concern, if not obsession, with origins reflects the central ideological importance of ideas of nation, nationalism and national identity: in particular, the belief that all peoples have to have a homeland and to share the appearance, characteristics and culture of other people from that same land.

The fundamental debate is whether foreign origin and ancestry should be used as the explanatory mechanism for unravelling the true nature of Gypsy identity, physiognomy, language, collective memory, nomenclature, culture, attitudes and behaviour. A supplementary question concerns the extent to which origin continues to have any bearing or significance the further that is travelled, in geographical distance and time, from the ‘homeland’. Although at various times there have existed fantastic theories of Egyptian origins and biblical explanations of their wandering, by the nineteenth century the debate was established around Indian versus indigenous origins. The first was based largely on ‘scientific’ theories and linguistic analysis, whereas the second emerged from a more socio-economic approach. The controversy hinges on different views as to whether anything remains of the original distinctiveness based on foreign origins following centuries of assimilation, acculturation, intermixing and intermarriage. At a recent academic conference one participant, employed by the Dutch Civil Service and perhaps frustrated by the determined lack of agreement among other members of the group, suggested that genetic and DNA testing could possibly now resolve the issue of origins once and for all. Once again, the weight of contemporary science was being called upon to resolve this age-old controversy.

The second major component which is always present in some form in every version of Gypsy identity is that of nomadism. Indeed it is almost universally agreed that Gypsy and nomadism go hand in hand, leaving the settled or

sedentary Gypsy at best a marginal and more usually an invisible figure in texts and the popular imagination. The various uses to which the concept of nomadism has been put are of particular interest.

In one form the simple equation is made between Gypsyism and nomadism – to be a nomad is to be a Gypsy, and to cease a nomadic way of life is to end being a Gypsy. Such a definition and usage was enshrined in the 1968 Caravan Sites Act. This definition of a Gypsy, and indeed of a nomad, is unacceptable to many for its loose and imprecise generalisations. Judith Okely, as noted earlier, introduces the notion of nomadism combined with nomadic *ancestry* as the keystone for her version of ethnicity. In yet another variant, which avoids such a generational or socialisation aspect, nomadism appears both as an inherited trait of all Gypsies, hence explaining their inability to settle or live within the confines of four walls, and as a state of mind. The latter curiously allows the Gypsy to remain a mental or spiritual nomad, and so retain the essence of Gypsyness, while nevertheless following an otherwise settled existence and lifestyle.

What we are faced with is a complex and multi-layered Gypsy identity – or rather identities, as we are talking not of a single identity but several – and also a high degree of difference and confusion in the application of labels, images and boundaries. In short, there is a complete lack of agreement concerning where the boundaries should be drawn around the group, what they should be called and how they should be represented. The confused knowledge and understanding of the group stem from the different and conflicting images. With such markedly dissimilar representations of the group, even after allowing for some degree of overlap, it is inevitable that responses and attitudes to the group will vary with the nature of the 'face' being offered, ranging from romantic sympathy to outright hostility. What is more, none of these 'faces' of Gypsy identity has managed to become the dominant or popularly accepted view, undermining and displacing all others. Instead, all of the competing images continue to coexist in language, newspapers, radio, television, nursery rhymes, songs, plays, opera, 'high-brow' literature, children's fiction, comics, art, film, scholarly texts, legislation, official documents and law reports. The contrasting definitions and images of the group vie with one another in mutual disharmony and remain present in all forms of cultural and political discourse. It is for this reason that the debates about identity continue to be fought as strongly today as at any other time.

Minority identity and group relations

A major reason for the sensitivity of the question, the volatility of the arguments and the significance and consequences of unsubstantiated bias is to be found in the relationship between identity and responses. Historically, the treatment of Gypsies, and the legitimising of that treatment, is bound up in one or other of the definitions of the group. How we categorise, label and represent minority groups

has a crucial and considerable bearing on their positioning within majority society and inter-group relations, and directly impacts on such issues as racism, discrimination, legal status and civil rights. This operates at the level of individual and personal responses as well as in terms of attempts to establish the size and nature of the group targeted for specific policy objectives.

It is possible to identify five key variables in the process of shaping group relations:

- the fixing of boundaries;
- the use of labels and the meanings given to them;
- the nature of information and knowledge about the group, derived from stereotyping and experience;
- characteristics of the group itself, in terms of size, location and visibility;
- external factors such as the socio-economic and political environment.

Of these, it is the first three in particular which have a bearing on this study.

The first variable to consider is boundaries, for the very reason that separating groups by whatever means creates insiders and outsiders, us and them. An awareness of difference need not necessarily lead to hostility or conflict but, equally, it does provide the essential basis for inter-group relations, whether harmonious or hostile. Boundaries that readily identify difference, such as skin colour, permit the easier expression of both positive and negative responses. If the fixed, impermeable boundaries of 'race' are put into place, then this can lead to the elevation of the group to an elite and revered status. Equally, though, it can define the parameters of a group targeted for discrimination and racism.

In particular, it is the racial definition that provides the essential basis for the construction of rigid pyramids within the travelling population, which in turn legitimises differential treatment. The racial notion of blood purity allows a clear hierarchical classification in which the Romany elite is inevitably placed at the top. This ordering has been widely adopted and accepted, forming the basis and rationale for local authority persecution, informing public prejudice against the perceived non-Romany Gypsies encountered in urban and rural environments, and by Gypsies themselves seeking to avoid discriminatory treatment.

Texts are littered with references to the way in which certain nomads sought to divert criticism away from themselves and on to another group by announcing their own racial purity and burdening others with such derogatory labels as mumply and diddycoy. In this way racial impurity went hand in hand with moral impurity and disregard for law, order, health and cleanliness. Rare indeed are the travellers who would admit to the impurity of their own racial stock.

This elevation of a Romany elite among the travelling population has also been widely accepted by local authorities, but not in order that the group is granted any special rights or privileges, except in theory. Rather, the intention has been to deny any such rights to others who fail to meet the exacting racial criteria for inclusion in the group. As Angus Fraser succinctly noted:

> Local authorities often pay lip-service to the virtues of the 'true Romany', and console themselves with the thought that they really have nothing against *him* [original emphasis], as they close yet another stopping-place.[29]

In this way, in defence of their harsh policies of evictions and harassment, English local authorities could claim that they were not persecuting the real Romany, the racial elite among travellers, but only the half-castes and impostors.

Nowhere are the consequences of a racial definition and the attempt to establish racial hierarchies and concepts of impure half-breeds more apparent than in Nazi Germany. The story of the Gypsy Holocaust is now emerging from its relative obscurity and neglect, and the recent growth in literature on the subject is best indicated by the publication in 1991 of a full-length bibliography by Gabrielle Tyrnauer for the Montreal Institute for Genocide Studies.[30] The story of the Nazi persecution of Gypsies both resembles and differs from their treatment of the Jews. Both were targets of long-established and unremitting persecution leading to the death camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Both also were the subjects of detailed investigations and reports into genealogy in an attempt to trace ancestry and identify the bloodlines of members of the group.[31] Where the stories differ is in the explanations provided for the campaign against the Gypsies, both at the time and subsequently, and the repercussions of these in the post-war years. Inevitably the issue revolves around definitions and identities. While there is no disagreement that the persecution and execution of the Jews had clear racial origins and motives, the experience of the Gypsies is more complex. The argument put forward by the Nazis, and repeated and reinforced by later commentators, was that Gypsies were persecuted because of their alleged asocial and criminal activities. In other words, their treatment at the hands of the Nazis had a socio-political and not a racial basis. The significance of this becomes apparent in the post-war period when the Gypsies were denied reparations and even recognition by the US Holocaust Memorial Council.[32] Inevitably, then, the issue of Gypsy identity, and which specific identity was at the root of the Nazi policy, has become a major political concern. Alternative explanations have now appeared which challenge the orthodoxy of Gypsies as asocials and seek to highlight the parallels between the Jewish and Gypsy experience. Ian Hancock and the International Romani Union have been at the forefront of this campaign, fighting for the acceptance of a definition of the Gypsy which establishes their separate ethnic identity and proves the racial origins of Nazi policies towards the group.

The use of more fluid and less deterministic ethnic boundaries also has wide, if ambiguous, significance. The identification of the group as different by virtue of culture and origins can serve to unleash xenophobic responses of 'threat' and 'swamping', provide the core for political movements which seek to promote and safeguard that difference, and act as the basis of multicultural initiatives. Notions of a separate ethnic Gypsy identity are central to the campaign for full civil

rights to be granted to Gypsies, including legal rights and protection by law from discrimination and the right to maintain their distinct cultural identity intact.

If, by way of contrast, a nomadic rather than a racial or ethnic boundary is adopted, then Gypsies are simply set apart by virtue of their travelling way of life. This prepares the way for the contempt of nomadism generally to be found in sedentary-based societies, based on the commonly held association of itinerancy with vagrancy, parasitism and criminality. The basic premise behind the pre-1965 Czechoslovak government's policy of attempting to bring an end to the Gypsy way of life and identity was that they did not constitute a nation or an ethnic group.[33] Such antipathy is, though, directed at the way of life rather than at the people, and any discrimination would in all probability end as soon as nomadism was abandoned and the basis of difference removed.

Closely associated with the process of boundary-forming is the attachment of labels to the group. These become a shorthand expression for group identity and characteristics.[34] The use of particular labels to designate a group helps to shape and determine responses because of the meanings associated with them.[35] Some travelling groups refuse to accept the name 'gypsy' because of what they see as the pejorative meaning given to the word, the negative imagery associated with it, and the fear that to be so labelled is to invite prejudice and hostility.[36] The term 'Traveller' is preferred instead.

In contrast, others deliberately and consciously accept the label 'Gypsy' for themselves, with the use of a capital 'G' signifying their rightful status as an ethnic group, or use instead Rom or, more recently, Rrom. For such reasons the arguments about whether to use Rom or Traveller and whether to capitalise the 'g'of Gypsy, are heated and controversial. The stakes are high and the political consequences far-reaching. Gypsy activists and campaigners will strongly contest any attempt to define or label the group in ways which could then be used as a stick against them in the campaign for full rights.

One major factor in the confusion over defining Gypsies stems from outsiders being presented with such a diverse range of images and stereotypes, all of which carry the label Gypsy. Romantic one minute, criminal vagrant the next. Alluring and seductive in one pose, filthy and diseased in another. The idyllic rural scene is shown in one picture, and images of urban squalor appear in the next. These contrasts and contradictions collide across all forms of representation, whether journalistic, cinematic, musical, literary or visual. The bemused non-Gypsy outsider scarcely knows which way to turn or what to believe when presented with this plethora of views. And yet this issue of representation and stereotyping is critical. For the most part, the knowledge most people have of Gypsies is obtained from precisely these secondary sources rather than direct experience.[37] Stereotypical images of groups affect how they are seen, how they are treated and the expectations that are held of them in terms of behaviour and abilities. Indeed, the connection between images and responses, especially in their negative and hostile forms, is a major theme and argument in host– immigrant studies in general. Many commentators have linked the hostile responses to Jews

with the presence of anti-Semitic stereotypes in culture and language, and a similar connection is made between representations of the barbaric Irish and anti-Irish sentiment, and the crude racial imagery of blacks and other minority groups and overt racism.[38] Particular emphasis has been given to the spread of negative racial stereotyping in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the growth of racism, nationalism and xenophobia.[39] It is not surprising therefore that the same connections are also made in Gypsy studies. The work of the Dutch historians Leo Lucassen, Annemarie Cottaar and Wim Willems has highlighted the importance of what they term the 'stigmatisation' of the group as the basis and justification for official and popular antipathy, and Ian Hancock persuasively argues that the persistent and hostile imagery created by outsiders is at the root of the problem of Gypsy and non-Gypsy relations.[40] A similar argument runs through much of the work of Jean-Pierre Liégeois, who offers a broad survey of the treatment of Gypsies. His initial premise is that 'images, whether spontaneous or contrived, subconscious or conscious, influence attitudes and behaviour'.[41] He further states, 'The image of Gypsies as forged by non-Gypsies has done much to incite a fear that in turn serves to justify and inspire rejection...rejection is bound up with the public's image of nomads and Gypsies.'[42] Elsewhere he repeats his view that distorted stereotypes and negative imagery account for the hostility and suspicion shown to the Gypsies.[43] His argument is that the standard stereotype draws on tales of well-poisoning, spreading the plague, crop-burning and witchcraft, all of which are seen as projections of fantasies of bygone ages and so provide a basic imagery which has remained virtually unchanged for centuries.[44] However, Liégeois also believes that the superficial and deceptive romantic image can be as damaging as the negative:

> Opinion polls show that the prejudices and stereotypes on which their image is based are everywhere to be found in the constant and repellent caricature of the nomad, coupled with the ambiguous and occasionally attractive myth of the Gypsy of folklore.… The further away in fact and fancy, the better. At a pinch, he [the Gypsy] is appreciated as part of myth. He is handsome, artistic and lives a carefree life, a symbol of freedom, accepted within the known marginal areas of folklore, music, dance, circus, song, living in an old caravan. The only acceptable, estimable Gypsy is the mythical Gypsy who does not exist.[45]

It is also not simply the case that stereotypes create hostility, but also the reverse: hostile images themselves grow out of pre-existing prejudice.[46] In a similar vein, Donald Kenrick and Siân Bakewell talk of images rationalising measures and measures reinforcing images in a vicious cycle which 'provides the basis for further violations of the Gypsies' human rights'.[47]

There is a commonsense and instinctive inclination to accept these often-repeated arguments, and the link between prejudice and stereotypes was picked up by Bohdan Zawadzki in a seminal article on the subject:

> In order to rationalise one's hatred against a whole group rather than against a single individual, the prejudiced person must resort to the use of *stereotypes* [original emphasis] in his thinking.[48]

However, it is also the case that they should be subjected to some critical attention. The link between images and responses is perhaps not as self-evident or inevitable as it at times appears. First, it is no easy task to provide evidence of a causal link between image and response, and the connection is usually made by their coincidental appearance. Also, representations of minority groups typically encompass comprehensive comment on origins, culture, behaviour, manner, disposition, appearance, mental capacity, values, beliefs, attitudes, physical attributes and instincts. The problem here is that any minority group is the subject of a range of images and representations, both negative and positive, many of which are ambiguous and contradictory. The Gypsy of the open road and idyllic nomadic lifestyle was envied by some and resented by others – same image, different response. The attempt to link the two is thus highly problematic. One attempt to circumvent this problem could be to try and identify any connection between dominant and popular images and commonplace responses. This also is not a straightforward or simple task. How can one image be seen as dominant over another? Do we judge this by the number of times that it appears? Or do we weight particular images, so that if they appear in scholarly or reference texts or state legislation they are given additional importance over those which appear in novels or children's comics?

Images are important for the way they provide information about a group to those who might not otherwise receive it because of the lack of any direct contact. Images, created for the most part by outsiders, provide a basis for how we interpret our experience, and pre-formed information and knowledge affect our perceptions and judgement by providing a normative, or standard, picture. Images themselves are rarely value-free, and the judgements they contain are often those that will generally be accepted. There can be little doubt that negative images reinforce negative responses and that there is some connection between racial stereotyping and discriminatory treatment. The problem lies in trying to argue that one leads, always and inevitably, to the other. Perhaps of more value is to see them as operating in a mutually reinforcing manner involving the selection of images to suit and justify specific responses. Because the stereotypes of a group cover every aspect of their life, behaviour, appearance and propensities, it is possible to find confirmation and justification for any action, hostile or favourable, by calling up the required image. There is no such thing as a single, negative and unchanged representation of the Gypsy, but rather a whole panoply of images which combine good with bad, favourable with unfavourable. For

every hostile response finding explanation and justification in negative imagery there can also be found an equal and opposite favourable response based on positive representations. The multifaceted, ambiguous and even contradictory stereotypes serve the purpose of providing a wide and deep well which can be drawn on, at will, to suit any circumstance or event.

The strength of stereotyped impressions is such that they can even outweigh compelling contrary evidence or firsthand experience. The judge in the 1988 case of the Commission for Racial Equality versus Dutton allowed his personal impressions to overcome the evidence of a Gypsy and expert witnesses concerning identity.[49] Philip Hine of Dorset, writing in his journal in 1825, recorded his 'belief' that the Gypsies he met with were guilty of some crime even though there appeared to be no basis for such judgement other than the prejudice of pre-formed opinions:

> I saw a great many Gipsies and their tents, likewise some very good horses, which no doubt they had stolen, for I believe there are not many, of that sort, that are not guilty of thieving or poaching or some bad crime.[50]

Similarly, it was common for writers on Gypsies to have pre-formed images of the physical characteristics and make-up of the group, taking in such features as black hair, brown eyes and dark skin. When these writers were confronted, for example, with children in the camps who did not fit in with this preconceived image, they claimed that these could not be true Gypsy children and even that they must be children stolen from non-Gypsy, or *gaje,* parents. Such examples as this are so frequent that they now appear unremarkable.

The processes of categorisation, labelling and representation are, then, at the very heart of majority-minority relations, both shaping and being shaped by popular responses as well as official or state attitudes and policies. It is important that these processes are seen in a two-way, mutually reinforcing relationship with responses. An image of a group can lead to a particular response, just as a particular response can lead to the creation and legitimisation of an image.

The idea that the Gypsy has many faces is usually used to convey negative notions of disguise and deceit. The 'faces' outlined in this chapter are those presented, for the most part, not by the Gypsies themselves but by a range of writers who believed they had captured the reality, or the true face, of the Gypsy. The resultant pictures were often formed as much from prejudice, misinformation, current vogues and assumptions as from truth and objectivity. The next chapter will develop this theme of constructed identities and offer a brief review of the history of writing on Gypsies and the nature and range of sources from which the many representations are obtained.

Notes

1 'Romany Rai' is described by the nineteenth-century Gypsy lorist Francis Hindes Groome as the term 'Gypsies designate lovers of their race'. See his entry 'Gypsies' in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 5, new edn, Edinburgh, 1893, pp. 485–490.

2 'Their existence serves no useful purpose to the country. They pay neither rent, rates, or taxes. They cause much unnecessary expense for police supervision. Their livelihood is obtained almost solely by trespassing, by robbing, by menacing. They live in most insanitary and immoral conditions.' (An extract from 'Romany Wry: Egginton tired of egging on the Gipsies', *Daily News,* 11 April 1907).

3 John Cripps, *Accommodation for Gypsies: A Report on the Working of the Caravan Sites Act, 1968* (London, 1977), paragraph 1.5, pp. 1–2.

4 For example, 'Who are the Gypsies?', *Church of England Magazine,* 1842, pp. 163–164, 292–294; 'Who are the Gypsies?', *The Country Gentleman and Land and Water Illustrated,* 29 September 1906, p. 1,076.

5 The issues around defining group boundaries have a much wider application and can be seen in, for example, debates about Jewish identity, Englishness and the notion of second-generation immigrants being 'between two cultures' and identities.

6 Judith Okely, *The Traveller Gypsies* (Cambridge, 1983); Judith Okely, 'Cultural ingenuity and travelling autonomy: not copying, just choosing', in T. Acton and G. Mundy (eds), *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), pp. 198–199.

7 For a strongly worded critical review of her *The Traveller Gypsies,* see Thomas Acton in *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 6, No. 3, 1983, pp. 385–386.

8 The International Group for the Study of Gypsy History is co-ordinated by the Centre de Recherches Tsiganes, Université de Paris V, 45 rue des Saints-Pères, F–75270 Paris Cedex 06, France. The Director of the Centre is Jean-Pierre Liégeois.

9 *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Moveable Dwellings Bill **[H.L.];** together with the Proceedings of the Committee. Ordered to be printed 28th July 1910* (London, 1910), paragraph 2, p. iii. See also *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Moveable Dwellings Bill [H.L.]; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices. Ordered to be printed 14th October 1909* (London, 1909).

10 See Colin Clark, *'Moving Targets': Britain's New Age Travellers* (Hatfield, 1998).

11 Groome (1893), p. 487.

12 The parallel with Jews and Jewish identity is evident and raises similar questions concerning whether there exists a supra-national identity and loyalty which is higher than that determined by place of birth.

13 K. Henwood, *Secrets of the Gypsies* (London, 1974), p. 9.

14 For examples of this, see Anne Beale, 'Gipsying', *Argosy,* Vol. 16, 1873, pp. 270–274; 'Gipsy Showmen', *The Globe and Traveller,* 26 May 1882; 'Gipsies', *Sharpe's London Magazine,* Vol. 7, 1848, pp. 169–172.

15 The work of these writers will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

16 Judith Okely, 'Gypsy identity', in Barbara Adams, Judith Okely, David Morgan and David Smith (eds), *Gypsies and Government Policy in England: A Study of the*

Travellers' Way of Life in Relation to the Policies and Practices of Central and Local Government (London, 1975), p. 28.

17 Judith Okely, 'Ethnic identity and place of origin: the Traveller Gypsies in England', in Hans Vermeulen and Jeremy Boissevain (eds), *Ethnic Challenge: The Politics of Ethnicity in Europe* (Göttingen, 1984), p. 5.

18 Angus M. Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992), p. 7.

19 Peter Ratcliffe notes that race and ethnicity are used 'without any clear appreciation of their meaning'. See P. Ratcliffe, '"Race" in Britain: theory, methods and substance', in P. Ratcliffe (ed.), *'Race', Ethnicity and Nation: International Perspectives on Social Conflict (London,* 1994), pp. 108–132.

20 Similarly, in an article in *New Society,* Kevin McGrath stated that he intended to use the term 'gypsy' in an inclusive sense, 'to take in all travellers', but then later wrote about gypsy cultural identity and heritage and also introduced the idea of the Romani. See Kevin McGrath, 'Gypsy or gorgio?', *New Society,* 18 January 1973, pp. 112–113.

21 See, for example, George Smith of Coalville, *I've been a Gipsying. Or, rambles among our gipsies and their children in their tents and vans* (London, 1885). See also, for a discussion of Smith and his work, David Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1988), chapter 6; Edwin Hodder, *George Smith of Coalville. The Story of an Enthusiast* (London, 1896).

22 Willy Guy, 'Ways of looking at Roms: the case of Czechoslovakia', in Farnham Rehfisch (ed.), *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers* (London, 1975), p. 222.

23 Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Gypsies and Travellers: Socio-cultural Data, Socio-political Data* (Strasbourg, 1987), p. 25. Angus Fraser has made the same point:

> It may be as well, first of all, to make it clear that in considering these developments, little heed will be paid to the distinction between various types of traveller—Gypsy, didicoi, mumper, tinker, etc. These distinctions are important in their place.
>
> (Angus M. Fraser, 'The Travellers: developments in England and Wales, 1953–1963', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* Vol. 43, Nos. 3–4, 1964, pp. 83–84)

24 Liegeois talks of a cultural exchange between travellers of Indian origin and indigenous travellers

> so that from the sixteenth century on 'mixed' groups formed in the British Isles and other parts of Europe, with characteristics of Indian origin being absorbed and reinterpreted by native nomads or with nomads from India absorbing and reinterpreting native characteristics. All north-western Gypsy groups are of this nature.

He continues two pages further on:

> The numerous arrivals in each country of Gypsy immigrants at different times, the fact that some have settled or travelled about less, that others have

> moved on or have continued as nomads within the country, and the existence of indigenous nomads and encounters with them, have meant that in each country there has been both a stratification and wide cultural and linguistic diversity.
>
> (Liégeois, 1987, pp. 18, 20)

25 *Ibid.,* p. 7.
26 *Ibid.,* p. 53.
27 *Ibid.,* p. 75.
28 The idea of mosaics, or sub-ethnicities, can also be seen in the work of Kenrick and Bakewell, who divide the UK Gypsy population into five groups, referred to as separate ethnic groups, presumably because of their different origins and culture. See Donald Kenrick and Siân Bakewell, *On the Verge. The Gypsies of England* (London, 1990).
29 Fraser (1964), p. 84.
30 Gabrielle Tyrnauer, *Gypsies and the Holocaust. A Bibliography and Introductory Essay* (Montreal, 1991), 2nd edn.
31 The legal foundation of the Nazi anti-Gypsy policy was laid by the Neurenberger Racial Acts of 1935, stipulating who were to be considered members of the New Reich. Persons with 'alien' blood – especially Jews and Gypsies – were to be excluded. To clarify who belonged to the category 'Gypsy', the psychiatrist Robert Ritter was instructed to begin a large-scale genealogical investigation, using the services of the *Zigeunerzentrale* (a police intelligence service on Gypsies). It was concluded that over 90 per cent of the Gypsies were of mixed blood, having intermixed with the lower strata of German society, and that such interbreeding was harmful to both groups. For a brief account of the treatment of Gypsies in Germany, see Annemarie Cottaar, Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, 'Justice or injustice? A survey of government policy towards Gypsies and caravan dwellers in Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 42–66.
32 This issue has been brought starkly to the fore in the debates over representation on the US Holocaust Commission. I am grateful to Ian Hancock for providing me with a most useful collection of press cuttings dealing with this topic.
33 Otto Ulč, 'Gypsies in Czechoslovakia: a case of unfinished integration', *Eastern European Politics and Societies,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1988, pp. 306–332. Even after 1965, when ethnicity was conceded, integration remained as the socialist goal.
34 Ian Hancock provides an example of a school headteacher in North America who said: 'I feel that the terms "gypsy" and "Romani" conjure up completely different mental images in the minds of most people, the "gypsy" being the person of fabled stories, and the "Romani" being that of an actual ethnic group.' See Ian Hancock, 'The roots of inequity: Romani cultural rights in their historical and social context', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, p. 6.
35 Jean-Pierre Liégeois provides an excellent discussion of labels, their changes and various linguistic devices whose function is to assimilate and to stigmatise, to both deny and highlight special features. He shows that the same processes operate in England as in France, Spain or elsewhere. See Liégeois (1987), pp. 136ff.

36 The World Romani Congress rejected the word Gypsy for these reasons. This also includes other words supposedly derived from Egyptian and applied to Gypsies by non-Gypsies such as Zigeuner, Gitans, Gitanos, Gitani, Yifti, Giftos, Yieftos. See Liégeois (1987), pp. 24, 130, 136, 155. See also Ian Hancock, 'The Gypsies/Roma', *Shmate. A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought,* Issue 17, Winter 1987, pp. 6–7.

37 See Vicky Jacob and Marjorie Bulos, 'Gypsy life: myth or reality?', *Housing,* Vol. 16, No. 8, August 1980, pp. 16–17.

38 The literature on stereotyping and responses is extensive and it is only possible to suggest an indicative sample here. See L. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot, 1971); Colin Holmes, *Antisemitism in British Society* (London, 1979); Brian Cheyette, 'Jewish stereotypes and English literature 1875–1920: towards a political analysis', in Tony Kushner and Ken Lunn (eds), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain* (Manchester, 1989); P. Brantlinger, 'Victorians and Africans: the genealogy of the myth of the dark continent', in Henry Louis Gates (ed.), *'Race', Writing and Difference* (Chicago and London, 1986); John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986).

39 As an introduction, see Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971); Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds), *Englishness, Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (London, 1986); Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1978); Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics 1890–1982* (Cambridge, 1986).

40 Cottaar, Lucassen and Willems (1992), pp. 42–66; Hancock (1992), p. 3. Hancock notes how the criminal anthropologist Professor Cesare Lombroso considered Gypsies as a living example of a race of criminals and that this view served as the basis for American legal attitudes, and was relied upon by lawyers, magistrates and others, for many years *(ibid.,* pp. 4–5).

41 Liégeois (1987), p. 130.

42 J.-P. Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History,* translated by Tony Berre (London, 1986), pp. 134, 136.

43

> This age-old rejection by the people is largely promoted by the negative picture painted of Gypsies and travellers which fosters suspicion. The stereotype established is a mixture of vague fear and superstition...the citizen seeks the reasons for his negation of the nomad in myth.
>
> (Liégeois 1987, p. 121)

44 Liégeois (1986), pp. 134–138.

45 *Ibid.,* pp. 130–132. This point was also made by Jean-Paul Clébert, who strongly condemned the 'facile picturesqueness' of images of Gypsies in magazines, newspapers and literature, which have 'little regard for the truth'. See Jean-Paul Clébert, *The Gypsies,* translated by Charles Duff (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 16.

46 See Wim Willems and Leo Lucassen, 'The church of knowledge: representation of Gypsies in Dutch encyclopaedias and their sources', in Matt T. Salo (ed.), *100 Years of Gypsy Studies* (Cheverly, Maryland, 1990).

47 Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), p. 19.

48 Bohdan Zawadzki, 'Limitations on the scapegoat theory of prejudice', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* Vol. 43, 1948, p. 130.
49 See *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, pp. 28–32; *Race Discrimination Law Reports: Commission for Racial Equality v. Dutton,* 27 July 1988, p. 163. See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion.
50 Philip Hine's Journal, 9 November 1825. Original located at the Dorset County Record Office.

2
Gypsy studies and socially constructed identities

Gypsiology

One of the most intriguing aspects in the history of the Gypsies is that a group so universally reviled can also demand and hold such widespread appeal and fascination. For this reason Gypsies appear in a range of printed and visual texts from the sixteenth century to the present day incorporating images in poems, plays and paintings, novels, religious tracts and official papers, and in remarkably varied types of newspapers and large-circulation magazines. Often, inevitably, the references are as fleeting and as ephemeral as the portraits of the group itself. However, there also exists a substantial body of works, again showing a great deal of diversity, broadly grouped under the all-encompassing heading of Gypsy studies, also sometimes referred to as Gypsiology or Tsiganology, and the practitioners as Gypsiologists or Tsiganologists. Such labels as 'Gypsy studies' and 'Gypsiologists' serve the purpose of conveying a degree of academic respectability and purpose to an area which has largely operated on the fringes of mainstream academic activity. Recently, Thomas Acton expressed the sentiments of many who work in this field when he called for an end to 'the marginalisation of Romani Studies in the world of knowledge'.[1] This plea was first made by the nineteenth-century Gypsy lorists, who were particularly keen to show that their work and publications were an objective and scientific scholarly enterprise, and so would stand alongside any other serious investigation, and were not just the indulgent pastime of amateurs. These miscellaneous writers, past and present, are frequently seen, by others and also by themselves, as Gypsy 'experts'. They are called upon to write encyclopaedia entries and stand as expert witnesses in legal cases and on official governmental enquiries and commissions. Their works form the core of any study of the group, are constantly reproduced in various guises as articles and newspaper features, and for these reasons are extremely influential in shaping public opinion of the group.

Wim Willems, in his major review of scholarly writing on the Gypsies, has used the label 'Gypsiologist' to refer to those who specifically have adopted and publicised the ethnographic perspective in carrying out their research on

Gypsies.[2] In this way the labels Gypsiology and Tsiganology are limited to a quite specific body of writing and analysis, ranging from the nineteenth-century lorists, to past and present members of the Gypsy Lore Society, and many contemporary researchers, writers and activists.

Strands of continuity run through the publications of this broad church of Gypsiologists, with evidence and arguments being regularly repeated and reproduced for different audiences at different times. It is often remarked that writers of the early and even late nineteenth century drew for their knowledge on a very limited range of sources, notably Grellmann, Pott and Wlislocki.[3] Even though there was little if any mention in these works of the English Gypsies, this did not prevent the ideas, arguments and images of the group being translated from their European context to the English experience. The same arguments about continuity can be made for the twentieth century. For example, the doctoral dissertation and subsequent book by Elwood Trigg bring this element of reproduction through to recent, and scholarly, studies, with his unproblematic and unquestioning reworking of material from the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society.*[4]

Various commentators have remarked on the narrowness of the focus within Gypsy studies, with emphasis restricted to a limited number of themes. Much of the ethnological and folklorist writing, which has tended to dominate the field of Gypsy studies, has been concerned primarily with the Gypsies' culture, resulting in a picture of separateness and of a static and unchanging community.[5] In 1975 Farnham Rehfisch wrote:

> For over two centuries books and articles have purported to record the life, history and culture of these people. Valuable studies are available primarily on their language, history and folklore. Unfortunately, reliable studies on their social structure and social organisation are few and far between.[6]

Despite repeated efforts to establish Gypsiology as a legitimate area of scholarly activity there have also been regular attacks which highlight problems with many of the works. Wim Willems, in his recent study *In Search of the True Gypsy,* effectively dismantles any claims to objectivity of early Gypsy studies, finding convincing evidence of plagiarism, unreliability, generalisation, weak and dubious argument, and flawed methodology.[7] Zoltan Barany, of Texas University, does not restrict his critique to past writers and, controversially, takes many current writers as his primary target when he writes of the 'poverty' of Gypsy studies. His criticisms pick up the theme of the tradition of poor scholarship, the lack of scholarly practices in research and presentation, statistical inaccuracies, and the lack of a comparative approach or framework. He further questions whether the enthusiasm, activism and 'political correctness' of many of the Gypsiologists compromise the scholarly content of their works and cause a loss of objectivity.[8] Not surprisingly, these condemnatory observations have led to a vigorous response and lively dialogue. Gypsy scholars have retaliated by

pointing to the 'wealth of outstanding work' written in the field, including works by authors criticised by Barany, and defending the loss of objectivity which accompanies activism by treating it as a strength rather than a weakness.[9]

Again, in the field of Gypsy studies battle lines have been drawn and the accusations and responses force the expression of extreme positions. There can be little doubt that the criticisms hold true for a number of works. Anyone who has worked in this area will have been frustrated by the number of times that texts slip into rhetoric and pedagogy and, often deliberately, hypotheses are presented as fact, and arguments are confused and contradictory. Anyone who has tried, often without success, to trace articles and publications from incomplete or inaccurate references will have some sympathy with Barany's position. However, his case is to some extent overstated and, despite a reference to 'signs of hope', he fails to give sufficient acknowledgement to many recent studies which are the product of high-quality research and which show the employment of rigorous methodology and scholarly practices.

The post-war years have witnessed a movement in Gypsy studies away from what has been termed an 'ill-defined mish-mash of folklorism (often amateur) and linguistics',[10] and as something undertaken outside the formal academic world, towards the status aspired to by the earlier lorists.[11] If old-style Gypsy studies were dominated by folklorists, anthropologists, philologists, antiquarians and amateur historians, then the generations emerging from the 1960s and 1970s and subsequently show a movement towards a more political and sociological orientation, but with the familiar traditions still present.[12] In particular, in the last twenty or so years, the number and range of scholarly investigations has so increased that Gypsy studies now includes works by academics from a range of backgrounds who have incorporated Gypsies into their wider disciplinary and research interests. Although not sharing the life-long commitment, and indeed activism, of the traditional Gypsiologists, their publications have significantly advanced our understanding of the historical and contemporary position of this group.[13]

As is to be expected, the diverse originating perspectives, motives and backgrounds result in texts which differ in their practices, approach, focus and purpose, and, as Diana Tong notes, '[s]cholarly writing on Gypsies is multidisciplinary, and each discipline has its points of interest and its pitfalls'.[14] The interest is provided by the refreshing new perspectives brought to Gypsy studies and the general shift in the nature and direction of enquiry. The traditional emphasis on language, folklore and customs has now come to be supplemented with, if not replaced by, a multidisciplinary attempt to investigate Gypsy-non-Gypsy relations in their urban, spatial, legal, popular and official aspects, and to indicate a culture and people that are varied, changing and adaptable. Much greater emphasis is now given to persecution and the politico-legal dimension and also, most recently, to the idea of constructed identity. The greater involvement of the broader academic community has given a diversity to Gypsy

studies which was missing from its earliest incarnations and which, in turn, is part cause and part effect of its improved status.

The growing acceptance of Gypsies as a respectable topic for academic study is indicated by the fact that the University of Greenwich has appointed a Professor in Romani Studies,[15] aspects of Gypsy history now find their way into university curricula, a conference at Leiden University in September 1990 considered the 'minorisation' of Gypsies and other travelling groups,[16] and in 1992 the Economic and Social Research Council agreed to fund a series of international seminars on Romani studies.[17] With these developments there are signs that the study of Gypsies is progressively breaking free from its former minority, marginalised and amateur associations. Yet the battle has not yet been won. In some quarters, including parts of the academic community, the study of Gypsies, unlike that of other minority groups, is still seen as somehow disreputable and the group as being unworthy of serious attention.

The ways in which Gypsy studies has changed, and indeed the shift in its academic respectability, is reflected in the growing involvement of historians. Until recently it was fair to say that Gypsies have had their histories but not their historians. In an article on Czechoslovakian Gypsies, Willy Guy noted that '[w]riters on history invariably and understandably ignore Roms. Writers on Roms frequently, and unforgivably, ignored history.'[18] Without wishing unnecessarily to detract from the histories which have been written, or sanctimoniously play the professional versus amateur card, it is nevertheless the case that the history of the group has mostly been written from an alarmingly ahistorical perspective. Too frequently the group is seen in splendid isolation, removed from the society, politics and the wider context of the time. The impression gained from many works is that the Gypsies existed in some kind of historical, geographical, temporal and social vacuum. It is revealing that when bibliographies are provided there are few, if any, texts that do not have 'Gypsy' somewhere in the title, which itself is a glaring admission of the extremely limited frame of reference of many of the writers.[19]

Historians have come rather late to Gypsy studies, and to a large extent the study of Gypsies has usually been undertaken outside the world of mainstream academic history. The likely reasons for such neglect are many. The group is numerically small, so contributing to their invisibility, although this has not prevented investigation into the Polish, Chinese, German or Lithuanian communities in Britain. They have perhaps been excluded from the histories of immigration, as it was forgotten, or not even realised, that Gypsies did not arrive in England until the early sixteenth century. Also, of course, there remain doubts as to whether Gypsies constitute a distinct and separate minority. These factors have meant that the Gypsies have remained largely marginal within the historical studies discipline, relegated to footnotes, included as one small part of the criminal or vagrant population, or ignored altogether.

It would be misleading, though, to suggest that Gypsies have been entirely abandoned by the historical profession, and the neglect by historians has been

relative rather than absolute. In recent studies it is possible to find increasing mention of Gypsies in works on criminality and the underworld,[20] on immigration and minority groups,[21] in works looking at the lower classes and migrancy,[22] and in recent studies of the Nazi state and the Holocaust.[23] For the modern period and British experience, Raphael Samuel, who, while on a foray into London's underworld, uncovered migrant Gypsy groups among the comers and goers to and from the metropolis.[24] Colin Holmes, author of major studies of anti-Semitism and immigration, investigated the German Gypsy 'invasion' of England in the early twentieth century, and also the highly idiosyncratic Samuel Roberts, who was probably the last adherent of a wholly biblical interpretation of Gypsy origins.[25] Gypsies were mentioned briefly in Lionel Rose's study of vagrancy, and George Behlmer, in *Victorian Studies,* offers a general overview of the nineteenth-century experience.[26] In recent years these accounts have come to be supplemented by the researches of historians throughout Europe, who are giving more of a central focus to Gypsy history. Following a resolution passed by the Council of Europe on 22 May 1989, the Centre de Recherches Tsiganes in Paris organised a series of study group meetings in order to bring together this growing body of historians from England, Germany, France, Portugal, the Netherlands and Spain, and to co-ordinate research and publishing activities.[27] The resolution, the meetings, the research and publications provide a graphic illustration of the changes that have occurred not only within the historical profession but, more broadly, in Gypsiology itself.

Running alongside this academic growth can be found a parallel expansion of general, public interest in the position of Gypsies in both present and past societies. National television and the non-tabloid press have brought to the attention of a much wider audience than previously the contemporary persecution of Gypsies in East Europe and the hostile treatment of the indigenous Gypsy population by local authorities and members of the wider host society. Similarly, the Gypsy Holocaust, as has been shown previously, is now the subject of an expanding body of literature and media attention. One of Britain's best-selling historical journals, *History Today,* has published various articles on Gypsies in recent years, and the Minority Rights Group has produced reports dealing with the European and British situation.[28] It is also noticeable that reviews of books dealing with Gypsies now appear in the national press, issues relating to Gypsy rights are raised in children's television shows, and documentary programmes are relayed on the radio.

The reasons for the expansion, organisation and growing status of Gypsy studies, and the general interest in the Gypsies as a minority group, are rooted in causes specific to Gypsies and Gypsy politics, and more generally in the changes that have occurred in minority studies as a whole. Such developments are part cause and part effect of the change in the nature and activities of the group itself, notably with the emergence of Gypsy pressure groups and organisations from the late 1960s onwards. These have forced the issue of Gypsy civil rights into the open and given the group a much higher political profile and visibility than has

been achieved before.[29] The right to maintain and pursue a nomadic lifestyle and culture and the right to protection from discrimination and racism are now established as key components of Gypsy–state relations.

The demand for such rights and protection has gained in strength as a consequence both of a growing public awareness of the historical persecution of the group, notably by the Nazis, and also of their contemporary treatment in East Europe and Britain. The resurgence of racism, nationalism and the far right in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, much of it directed against the Gypsy populations, and the horrors of ethnic conflict have pushed issues of minority rights, group identity and group relations to the forefront of both the political domain and the public conscience. It is against this broad backcloth of a changed and changing climate in which minority issues have assumed major political significance that scholarly concerns and interests are shaped.

As mentioned, the evolution of Gypsy studies should also be understood within the context of minority studies generally. For many years the history of minority and immigrant groups has itself been marginalised and overshadowed by the more contemporary investigations of political scientists, urban geographers and anthropologists.[30] In recent years much has been done to correct this imbalance. The number of historical monographs has grown rapidly, and specialist journals have emerged and established themselves alongside the more familiar and mainstream titles. The growing level of historical research in this field is also indicated by the appearance of academic conferences addressing minority issues. A further sign of this upsurge of interest, and one clear outcome of the growth in publications and research activity, is the inclusion of courses dealing with immigrant and minority themes in undergraduate history courses. In Britain, immigrant and minority studies, or ethnic and racial studies, are now firmly established as a major area for research initiatives, and many universities have one or more persons actively engaged in both research and teaching in this area. Centres devoted specifically to the study of immigrant and minority groups have been established in a number of major universities, the main publishing houses have now included this area alongside the traditional sociology and history catalogues, and there now exist, at the last count, eight specialist journals which deal with immigrant and minority affairs.[31] While Gypsy studies still trail a long way behind the more established focus on larger and more prominent groups, the progress made in recent years has nevertheless been impressive, drawing in scholars from diverse backgrounds studying ever-widening themes.

Social construction: the concept

In order to make some headway through what can fairly and accurately be described as the multiplicity of Gypsy faces and the maze of Gypsy identities it is necessary to begin by considering some problems associated with identity, and related issues around group formation and categorisation. Identity is itself an elusive and complex concept that raises important questions about how, and

why, identities, whether group or individual, are formed and reproduced. These questions in turn lead to ideas of social construction and the social processes of classification, developed initially within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

From Robert Miles' study of racism we are provided with one model of the concept of social construction which depends on the twin, related processes of *selection* and *signification.* We are presented here with the notion that groups are formed, identified and defined by selecting from a range of possible criteria only those which are deemed to be significant. A group can be formed according to such selected characteristics as skin colour, place of birth or religious beliefs. In practice it is not usual for just one criterion to be used, but rather a combination are brought together to form the composite. The idea of *social* construction derives from the fact that there is no unanimity or consistency in the selection of significant differences and that these vary both over time and between different signifiers.[32] The clearest example of this is in the way that ethnic criteria have largely come to replace racial criteria as the primary distinguishing characteristic between groups. Race and ethnicity should both be seen as concepts having specific meanings determined by the concerns of the time of their origin and development.[33] Social construction should be understood not just in terms of the creation of an image or stereotype, as it is often used, but also in terms of the framework or boundaries within which the stereotypes have their meaning.

The starting point for many of these endeavours was provided by the seminal works of writers such as Edward Said, Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger and Benedict Anderson, writing on Orientalism, nationalism, national identity, invented traditions and imagined communities.[34] The argument that how we see and relate to the 'other' can only be understood if we examine the society within which the discourses, representations and constructions of the 'other' are reproduced, is now almost taken for granted. The idea of social construction has subsequently found its way into a broad range of historical texts and analyses, on occasions with the model being explicitly stated and applied, and elsewhere remaining as the core, if hidden, assumption. It forms a major strand at academic conferences and it is impossible to pick up publishers' catalogues without finding several volumes with the words 'construction', 'representation' or 'identity' in the title.[35] To this can be added the even larger number of articles and papers which employ the same terms and concepts. Identity and difference are now established as the focus of key debates in cultural studies, with inevitable overspill into other disciplines.[36] In recent years studies of representation and constructed identities have appeared in relation to, for example, national identity, gender, London, class, whiteness, the poor, masculinity, ethnic groups, caesarean childbirth, motherhood, sewers and sewermen, witches, the 1930s, germs and disease.[37] Without wishing to impose a false uniformity on such different ventures, it nevertheless seems fair to say that they each share a concern with how events, people, knowledge and difference are constructed through language,

discourse and visual imagery, and that how we see any of these is in some way limited and subject to constraints. In particular, the picture we are given of nations, groups or individuals is selective, value-laden and incomplete.

Ideas concerning identity, boundaries and representation are not new in the field of ethnic studies. Any study of any ethnic group necessarily has to be concerned with boundaries and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Similarly, the stereotyping of minority groups has long occupied the attention of historians and others. Having established the parameters of the group, the concern is then with how that group has been represented in film, fiction and elsewhere.[38] The difference is that the ideas and theories behind them are now much more explicit. Most writers dealing with the stereotyping of minority groups share the view that representations say more about the period when the image was produced and about the attitudes, presumptions and objectives of the producer(s) of the image than they do about the represented. To put it slightly differently, the image of a group can only be understood by looking at the social context of its production and its producer. Stereotypes are, in other words, socially constructed. Indeed, it is this standpoint, informed by the theory and practice of post-structuralism, which informs many studies in this area. The range of representations which are now being discussed and analysed is vast, from film roles to newspaper advertisements, and from literature and the media to autobiography. Scarcely any form of representation, public or private, cultural or political, has escaped critical attention.

Of particular relevance for this study is the way these writers and approaches have demanded a fundamental rethinking of the whole question of boundaries and how identities are formed from an historical perspective. They have forced a movement away from the idea that the ties which bind a people together are in any way natural and organic, and instead suggest that what we see as customary and traditional are in fact inventions. Clearly this has a major bearing on such concepts as ethnicity which depend on notions of authentically different cultures, language and ways.

Social construction and Gypsy studies

Ideas around boundaries, identity and representation have been present in many works which would fall under the heading of Gypsy studies, and, indeed, much that falls outside it. The question ‘Who are the Gypsies?’ immediately places boundaries and identity at the forefront. Similarly, the representation and stereotyping of the group lie behind investigations into notions of ‘truth’ versus ‘reality’. Echoes of the work of Edward Said can be found in the important study by Judith Okely when she writes that non-travellers use images of travellers as a projection of their own mythical and nostalgic longings for some lost innocence.[39] Thomas Acton also investigated the idea of the ‘real’ Gypsy and stereotyping in his 1974 study of ethnic ideology and pressure politics among British Gypsies.[40] These themes informed Part 2 of my *Gypsy-travellers in*

Nineteenth Century Society, which looked specifically at images of Gypsies through a range of British sources, from the novelist George Borrow and the lorists to philanthropists, evangelists and legislators, and was primarily concerned with problems around definitions and stereotypes. These themes were subsequently taken up and developed by other historians and researchers, expanding the scope of the enquiries to cover wider historical periods and the European experience.

The first time that the idea of social construction was consciously and explicitly used in relation to Gypsies was at a conference held in Leiden in 1990. The conference was organised into various strands, each in some way addressing the issue of minorisation. Unfortunately in the Gypsy strand the intent and promise remained unfulfilled, and many of the sessions lapsed into defensive manoeuvring by the proponents of the differing definitions. Rather than treating the issue as problematic, the sessions became the forum for the intransigent defence of particular views on identity. Once again it was evident that questions concerning Gypsy identity were not being treated as open-ended problems, but rather as questions that had an answer which could be established and justified at the expense of all others. In short, the ideas and concept of social construction became very much submerged beneath familiar and well-trodden arguments concerning origins.

The Leiden theme was next picked up in a series of seminars organised by Thomas Acton, Professor of Romani Studies, at the University of Greenwich, between 1993 and 1994. The conference papers, with some additions and revisions, were then published in two companion volumes, entitled *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity,* and *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity.* The reasons for mixing Gypsy, Traveller and Romani in the titles are not made clear. This seems a surprising omission given the fundamental importance of labels to the whole issue of identity, and important questions are left unanswered: is the use of these labels intended to suggest that the terms are interchangeable and the groups referred to by these labels are one and the same? Or is the purpose to highlight difference: different labels, different identities?

Within these two volumes the issue of identity is treated in two contrasting ways. We have reached the stage where notions of the true and pure Romany are now generally recognised as racialised and romanticised constructs. However, in their place there now exists an equally forceful ethnic definition, also reliant on clear boundaries and distinctive practices, which is presented by many of the contributors to these volumes. However, other contributors treat the issue of identity as more problematic. David Smith shows how the painted wagons, widely seen as a hallmark of Gypsy identity, were in fact of non-Gypsy origins, echoing the idea of invented traditions. In other articles identity is treated as something manufactured, constructed and formed.[41] Also, we learn that there is a disparity between the identity created and promoted by Gypsy intellectuals and activists and the group itself, that identity is self-forming as well as something which is imposed, and that majority society manipulates identity by means of

discriminatory legislation and through media representations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the idea emerges that identity is a process, constantly being reinvented, with the borrowing from and interaction with the dominant society and culture being a form of reinterpretative ingenuity and creativity rather than an expression of deference or dilution. All these ideas act as fundamental challenges to the often-repeated view of a common identity, shared by Gypsies everywhere, which has remained static over long historical periods.

The two volumes identify two further, key issues: firstly, the place and role of the intellectual in Gypsy studies, and in forming distinctive and authoritative versions of identity. Secondly, they reveal the wider struggle to build up Gypsy organisations which aim, in the words of the books' publicity, to 'unite different groups who are often suspicious of each other'.[42] These ideas are picked up in the article by Nicolae Gheorghe entitled 'The social construction of Romani identity'. By this Gheorghe is referring to the process of what he terms 'ethnic building', involving a revised identity which has moved from the despised, inferior Gypsy to the persecuted, respectable and equal Roma. This shift involved the establishment of Roma roots and origins, giving the group a national minority status.

This is where Gheorghe appears to part company with the Gypsy intellectuals promoting this image and, in his view, constructing careers on the basis of it. Instead of a discourse and identity based on origins, nation and nationalism, which is where the discourse on the ethnic definition is heading, Gheorghe favours the idea of a transnational identity. What he means by this is best expressed in his own words:

> Why have I used the word 'transnational' from the array of concepts which are on offer to describe non-territorial or cross-stata *[sic]* or dispersed minorities? The idea, the meaning, is to indicate that we can evolve in a different way from nation states and national minorities. I wish to assert that we can build up an ethnic dynamic and a new image by reference to and in interaction with non-national institutions or supra-national institutions.[43]

In short, he recognises that identity is sometimes built and invented, and, importantly, that it has a political purpose and is part of a political strategy. That he favours a transnational rather than a national objective is where he and other commentators and activists take their separate paths.

The final body of research that should be considered in relation to ideas of constructed identity is that carried out by the Dutch historians Leo Lucassen, Wim Willems and Annemarie Cottaar. Much of their work has been around issues of criminalisation, stigmatisation and representation. The argument being presented is that 'Gypsy', as a label and description of a people, was used by the church and state authorities to apply to a wide and diverse group of nomads and vagrants whom they wanted marginalised from the rest of respectable society.

This large grouping was then criminalised and stigmatised. Their itinerant and nomadic behaviour was outlawed and the group had attached to them a range of negative and hostile stereotypes.

However, it is with Willems' most recent book that we have the fullest and most explicit statement of constructed identity to date. Essentially his study is a detailed investigation into three people whose works and/or activities had a major bearing on how Gypsies have been seen and treated. The first writer to be considered is Heinrich Grellmann, a German scholar of the eighteenth century described as 'the father' of Gypsy studies and said to have laid the foundations for the scientific study of Gypsies.[44] Although he produced only one treatise on the subject, this was the first major study of the group and one which was to have a considerable impact through the nineteenth century and beyond. Grellmann came quickly to be regarded as the leading authority on Gypsies and his work formed the basic foundation of the racial picture present in a great number of nineteenth-century studies. In certain cases the echoes of his work were so loud as to become virtual verbatim transcripts.[45] Following in the wake of Grellmann, a major figurehead in the Gypsiologist tradition, can be found a number of works by various evangelists, inspired primarily by a concern for the spiritual health of the Gypsies.[46] Although this group is mentioned in Willems' text the next major figure to be examined is the author George Borrow, often regarded as *the* authoritative writer and novelist on the group.[47] Borrow in his turn provides the lead into the studies of a group of devoted Gypsy enthusiasts who eventually formed themselves into the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888.[48] Finally, Willems considers the work of Robert Ritter, the Nazi racial scientist, child psychologist and eugenicist. In effect, then, the spotlight is on an eighteenth-century German scholar, a nineteenth-century writer and agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society who even his own, and charitable, biographers describe as a very strange and eccentric individual, and a Nazi who was in no small measure responsible for the attempted genocide of the Gypsies under the Third Reich.

Willems' approach, which serves to unify these disparate individuals, is to investigate the methodology, sources and arguments of each. In particular, Willems highlights one aspect of Gypsy studies which has served to bring discredit on the whole genre, namely the tendency for works to be highly derivative, often from unacknowledged sources, and based on suspect methods of enquiry. His study shows that, rather than seeing any of the works by any of these three as being based on objective or scientific study, they should be read and understood as products of their time, framed and limited by contemporary ideas about the classification of peoples generally, and the Gypsies specifically.

From the work of Lucassen, Cottaar and Willems it is possible to identify two main 'constructed' perspectives: the ethnographic and the criminological. This schema can be slightly modified by linking it with the earlier description of the four 'faks' of the Gypsy. The criminological coincides with what I have already identified as the vagrant/nomadic. However, the ethnographic can be usefully

subdivided into the racial, the ethnic/racial/primordialist, and, finally, the ethnic/cultural/situationalist.[49]

These various studies, especially that by Wim Willems, have undoubtedly moved the debates a long way towards developing the concept of social construction in relation to this specific minority group. However, there remains a tendency to see the social construction of identities as something that occurred in the past, and more recent present-day texts are somehow excused. Yet most new works on Gypsies continue to treat the issue of identity as a means of forwarding a specific view at the expense of others, and the difficulties and complexities of identity-formation and reproduction are quietly ignored.

This can be seen, for example, in the recent study by Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and their Journey*.[50]

Fonseca establishes the main components of the separate Gypsy ethnic identity early in her text: distance from non-Gypsies and the maintenance of a particular set of prohibitions. The importance of pollution taboos is central to her argument about distinctiveness, claiming that the Gypsy worldview of separateness 'is codified in hundreds of unwritten laws and superstitions enforcing symbolic purification' and is therefore the basis of Gypsyhood. She says, 'The secret society continues. Its tangled underbrush of prohibitions – the Gypsy hedge – is intact.' We are even told that the risk of contamination rather than fear of sodomy explains the Gypsy fear of being imprisoned with polluted non-Gypsies. Other distinctive features are established in the opening pages of the book, where she uses words such as 'survival', 'obscure', 'diaspora', 'exodus', 'persecution', 'nomadic', 'black-eyed' and 'rootless' – that is, a combination of a shared past, common experiences, physiological difference, distinct way of life, behaviour and attitudes. We are also informed that Gypsies have no need of privacy or quiet, preferring noise and company, and have an antipathy to regimented labour. However, for Fonseca, the cornerstone and kernel of Gypsy identity is the Romani language. She even stresses the spirit of the language rather than the actual words themselves, seeing the language as gregarious, typically expressive and extremely emotional. The clear and intended message is that the characteristics of the language describe the character of the people. Fonseca fully accepts the theory of Indian origins, believing that the work of Grellmann in the late eighteenth century resolved for good any doubt about the provenance of Europe's Roma. All these features and characteristics combine, in her view, to give the Gypsy an identity which transcends any national boundaries.

When Isabel Fonseca's book was first published it was given a level of media attention not usually shown to books with a Gypsy theme. High profile reviews were to be found in various Sunday newspaper colour supplements and in the broadsheet daily press. Undoubtedly partly as a result of such publicity, the book was into a fourth pressing within a year. That is, it is a widely read book and one that is influential in informing opinion about the Gypsies. The initial acclaim which the book received has now given way to some rather more critical observations concerning her use of sources, methods and representations of the

group, and the book is now being seen as less expert and authoritative than it first appears. Fonseca has been accused of repeating, often without acknowledgement, old and now discredited ideas, and of giving undue weight to particular texts.[51] In other words, her version of Gypsy ethnicity involves the selection of significant differences which resemble the criteria and language adopted by the early Gypsiologists. Her debt extends to her methodology, and Fonseca stands as the latest in a long line of writers who, through living with, travelling with and befriending the Gypsies, claimed to be offering a rare insight into the ways of a group described as separate and secretive.

As mentioned previously, Fonseca's book was initially well received and given a very high level of publicity, establishing it as of some importance in revealing the true nature of Gypsy identity to a wide public. Much of the critical response which later emerged has remained confined, primarily, within Gypsiologist circles. Yet, although critical of the detail of her arguments and methods, most nevertheless share with Fonseca the broad picture of the Gypsies as a separate ethnic group. However, the critique must be taken one stage further, identifying the text as one of the more recent studies in which a particular picture of the Gypsies is selectively built, incorporating elements from both the racial and ethnographic perspectives.

To summarise, it is useful to borrow a simple building analogy in order to highlight the key features of the different constructions of Gypsy identity. The foundations of the racial Gypsy house are rooted in nineteenth-century scientific theories. The building is uniform and virtually unchanged over time or between countries. The building bricks are composed of Indian origins, dark physiognomy, a Romany language, a wanderlust, and particular values and culture, all held together by the mortar of racial theory, inheritance and blood ties. The members of this household are born into it and remain in it all their lives. Some commentators place this house in the best district and do all they can to preserve it in its timeless purity. Others, however, find it only in the rundown areas and want to see it destroyed. The ethnic building is a diverse structure, able to take a number of different forms. It only began to be built in the twentieth century and only became a solid and secure structure in the post-1945 period. In one form it very closely resembles the racial building, using the same bricks but in this case holding them together by the mortar of origin, culture and ancestry rather than racial science. In another form the bricks are slightly different, with nomadic ancestry replacing those of foreign origin but otherwise with close similarities. The members of this house are born into it also, but in the latter case it is possible to become a member of the household over a period of generations. The nomadic building is of a different shape altogether, resting on different foundations, composed of different bricks and housing an entirely different population. The base is to be found in nomadism and the bricks are a range of itinerant occupations mixed with the vagrant. The house does have its respectable rooms but most are shabby and ill-kempt. The door to the house is left open at all times and people freely enter and leave at will.

The houses therefore differ in the shape of their construction, foundations, contents and character, location and permanence, and whether the occupants are a small and enclosed elite or a fluid and constantly changing population. The basic structures, as we have seen, have been built on the separate foundations of race, ethnicity and culture/class. In order to understand this process and its significance it is necessary to consider the builders and their use of different plans, materials and frameworks. Also, in addition, the use of the building and the purposes of its construction must be examined, as these various constructions do not come into existence and then simply fade away, to be replaced by another. Instead they continue to persist, and even gain in strength through repetition and reproduction, long after the original context of their production has passed. The belief that the Gypsies constitute a separate racial group has long outlived the scientific discrediting of the classification: although the foundations of the racial house have been removed, the building remains standing largely as a result of the ideas and writings of certain individual authors and groups of writers contributing to the persistence of this particular construction through its repetition in various forms.

This study will focus on the processes of both the formation and the reproduction of Gypsy identities from the early sixteenth century through to the present day. The period covered is clearly extensive, and it might seem that a survey of 500 years is too ambitious, resulting in a generalised text. However, the long period covered by this work is both justified and made necessary by the theme being addressed. In order to understand and appreciate the current debates and controversies over identity it is essential to locate their historical origins and evolution. The focus will be on the English experience, as to consider this issue on a worldwide scale would be an impossible task for a single individual. However, the case of the English Gypsies, like any national grouping, reveals the full range of multidimensional images, boundaries and labels. The way the various identities of English Gypsies have been constructed will find an echo in every other national example.

A study of the English experience will raise inevitable questions concerning the relationship of English Gypsies to those of other nations. Are the Gypsies a uniquely formed group with their own separate and distinctive identity? Or are the English Gypsies just one national grouping of a larger world Gypsy population which would include such other national groups as the Vlach, Sinti and Rom? Essentially this is to ask whether there is an overriding transnational Gypsy identity which allows for national differences but which retains a belief in an overall cohesion and meaningful unity for the group. The alternative is to see the national differences as an impediment to any real sense of transnational bonds.

Necessarily, any study of the Gypsies will inevitably have to concentrate on the vast body of material which comes under this broad label of Gypsy studies. However, it is also necessary to go beyond this. If you are concerned with identity-formation and consolidation it is essential to look at the other ways in

which these are achieved. Arguably, this broader and more popular sweep of material is in some ways more important – the general public will likely obtain their image and definition of the group more from novels and children's literature, articles in the press, cartoons and the like than from an obscure monograph by a dead Gypsiologist.

Historiographical and source review

Given the period covered, the range and number of sources to be considered is potentially infinite, from the major body of works which take the Gypsies as their primary focus, often their only focus, to all those many sources and texts in which Gypsies appear as minor players and footnotes. The researcher is faced with the problem not of having to scratch around for material, but of selecting and making sense of the vast body which does exist.[52] However, as the anonymous contributor on Gypsies to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* noted, '[t]he literature on the Gypsies is richer in appearance than in reality', drawing attention to the proliferation of short articles, the relative lack of major book-length studies, and also to the way in which much of what has been written and produced simply and uncritically (and often without acknowledgement) repeats earlier work.[53]

The problems with sources on Gypsies are many, and Diana Tong commented in the introduction to her Gypsy bibliography that many works 'contain misleading factual errors (often in the form of repetition of legend as fact), reinforce dangerous stereotypes, and cry out for critical comment'.[54] Her criticisms extended to both academic and non-academic writing; she accuses the former of blatant romanticisation and the latter of cramming the Gypsies into 'Procustean *[sic]* beds of economic niche theory, middleman theory, ecological theory, and so on'.[55] Problems of repetition and plagiarism can be found in texts from the middle of the sixteenth century to the present day. Judith Okely provides an acerbic comment on this:

> Every time a stereotype of Gypsies' language, beliefs and culture reappears, it transpires that this is not an original discovery as the individual author would have the reader believe, but a shameful repetition of earlier texts. Even more incredible is the practice of lifting statements and anecdotes from previous texts and rewriting them so that the latest author appears to have heard and experienced the events first hand.[56]

Plagiarism can be found in both written and visual sources on Gypsies to a very high degree, and the reasons for this can only be surmised.[57] Perhaps the subject matter attracts dilettantes and the populist demands override the scholarly, or perhaps there are genuine difficulties caused by fieldwork which forces the writer into a reliance on texts which would be unknown to most new readers. Anne Sutherland, writing in 1975, highlighted similar problems with many

works on Gypsies, noting that there existed 'a surfeit of wild generalisations and a paucity of solid reliable information'.[58] In short, sources on Gypsies are plagued with gaps, errors, repetition, generalisation and romanticisation. There can be few groups about whom so much has been written with so little being of any quality: a large part is pure invention, much involves the casual repetition of stereotypes, and many writers simply take the subject matter as an opportunity to find an outlet for their own fantasies and imagination.

It is an often-repeated truism that the majority of the writing on Gypsies has been produced by outsiders. Inevitably, the nature, tone and content of any document will be influenced by the background of the author(s), the context of production, the constraints imposed by the medium of production and the expectations of the audience of that medium. Yet, almost unfailingly, writers on Gypsies claim that their works are authentic and accurate portrayals of the group, and in many cases assume that firsthand contact with the Gypsies provides an unquestionable basis for their objectivity. Indeed, through much of the writing on Gypsies can be found a persistent belief that the history of a group can only be fully explored and written with some kind of direct testimonial evidence from the group itself. In other words, it was felt that the relative absence of Gypsy-produced sources had created blindspots when it came to writing the history of the group.[59]

This apparent absence of self-produced sources and the related silence of the Gypsies created an impression of a separate people whose way of life and culture were largely impervious to intrusion by non-Gypsies. Indeed, it heightened their mystery and relative invisibility, which for many are among their most intriguing and beguiling qualities. In some accounts their separateness was said to be conscious and deliberate, with the Romany language used as a means of excluding the non-Gypsy speaker and of asserting the distinctiveness of Gypsy identity The reluctance of Gypsies to reveal the secrets and intimacies of their lives to potentially hostile outsiders stemmed largely from the justifiable belief that information is a source of power which could be turned against them. The task of the Gypsiologist was to break down these barriers and overcome the silence. It was felt that only by penetrating the 'secret' world of the Gypsy and tapping directly into the vein of their orally based culture could the blindspots be overcome. For many, this task took on the quality of a missionary expedition, travelling into the secluded camps of a dark and mysterious people innately, and inevitably, suspicious of outsiders and intruders. The duration of the 'mission' varied, ranging from occasional interviews by, for example, journalists to befriending the Gypsies and even to taking up, albeit temporarily, the nomadic lifestyle in order to enjoy a sustained period of what would now be called participant observation. This strategy of penetration was adopted by those hostile to the Gypsies and their way of life, seeking information in order to condemn, as well as those more inclined to sympathy and support.

The pioneering Gypsy lorists, the Romany Rais, of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made it an essential part of their work and studies to

develop and sustain Gypsy contacts. Correspondence in the archive at Liverpool University reveals the enthusiastic way they tracked and traced any Gypsy presence in their home areas, eagerly reporting their discoveries to lorist colleagues. George Smith of Coalville, a noted Victorian philanthropist and self-proclaimed saviour of the Gypsy children, also made a point of regularly visiting the Gypsy camps, but perhaps less to obtain information than to give the benefit of his advice for material and spiritual salvation. More recently, both Judith Okely, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh and author of the influential *The Traveller Gypsies,* and David Sibley, author of *Outsiders in Urban Societies,* also relied heavily on personal observations and experience gained during frequent visits to or stays with Gypsies.[60] Sibley notes that his main research method was informal social association and obtaining information by 'unsolicited comment rather than from responses to pointed questions'.[61] In order to obtain a 'unique insight into a lifestyle untouched by the modern world', the photographer Yves Leresche went to live with the Calderari Romanian Gypsies in 1990.[62] The list of those who have adopted this particular practice could be greatly extended and would include George Borrow, who travelled with the Gypsies in Spain and East Europe as well as in England, Paspati with the Turkish Gypsies, Colocci in Italy, Kounavine in Russia, and Heinrich von Wlislocki, who has been described as 'the first person to give an accurate picture of Gypsy life, based on his own observations and experience'.[63]

The first obstacle facing any of these investigators was how to overcome the natural suspicions which the Gypsies had of anyone probing into the personal and private details of their lives and ways. At best, the Gypsies were thought either to be secretive and closely protective or else to be simply saying what the questioner wanted to hear, and, at worst, they were prone to lying and deliberate deception in order to mislead. The intrusion of outsiders would rarely be welcomed, and the intrepid Gypsiologists and investigators were forced to resort to various strategies in order to ingratiate themselves with the group and avoid antagonising or alienating their Gypsy interviewees. The Reverend George Hall, a noted and respected Gypsiologist in the early part of the twentieth century, recommended that notebooks and pencils should not be produced in their presence.[64] The early lorists claimed to have overcome the prejudices, fears, anxieties and hostility of the Gypsies by speaking a few words of the old Romany tongue. Paradoxically, although they saw language as essential to the separateness of the group, they would have us believe this boundary crumbled to nothing and the hearts and mouths of the Gypsies were opened to them when a few Romany words of greeting were uttered. George Smith of Coalville thought that the Gypsies could be persuaded to his side by the offer of sweets and tobacco.[65] More recently, Judith Okely's method for gaining the trust of the Gypsies was equally deliberate and planned, and involved changing clothes in a lay-by to something considered more appropriate to the people with whom she was to be staying.

Martin Block, writing during the Nazi period and author of one of the most vicious texts against the Gypsies that has ever been written, also thought that gifts of tobacco and brandy would win the friendship of the Gypsies. But his guide to the potential Gypsiologist was more comprehensive than this: he suggested that the researcher should learn Romany, be patient and inconspicuous, and, above all, 'in order to avoid the dangers of caricaturing or inventing the Gypsy life', must for a time become one of them. He wrote: 'You must be absorbed in gypsy life in order to understand it. You must become a gypsy yourself.' Only in this way could objectivity undistorted by prejudice and criticism be realised. As Block recognised, this involved no little sacrifice: 'you have to be able to eat off dirty plates, sit next to lice-ridden people, live in an overcrowded caravan, fish food out of a common plate, eat hedgehogs, and crack lice with your teeth'. Moreover, the researcher was advised not to stay too long as association with the Gypsies 'subjects a civilised person to influences which he cannot resist and which destroy him in the end'. In no other text was such full advice provided on strategies to infiltrate and understand the Gypsy way of life and in no other text did the author so obviously fail to meet his own criterion of objectivity.[66]

There are, then, evident and important differences among those engaging in participant observation, from the overtly racist and hostile Martin Block to the more sympathetic, romanticised, but also racial, perspectives of the nineteenth-century lorists, and on to the more scholarly, anthropological researches of Judith Okely and others. The significance of these various studies is twofold. First, one outcome of the resultant publications was that the authors were generally elevated to the status of 'experts' on Gypsy matters. It is no coincidence, for example, that George Smith, a regular visitor to the Gypsy camps and self-proclaimed expert, was called repeatedly before various Commissions of Enquiry to give evidence about the Gypsies. Second, the use of firsthand experience, direct knowledge and testimonies from Gypsies themselves conveyed a sense of objectivity not apparent in other works. Often the Gypsies themselves were given a voice in the resultant texts, with the publication of direct, verbatim transcriptions of conversations offered to the reader in support of a particular analysis or description. It was rarely considered that, at best, these could only be mediated and interpreted accounts, and, at worst, they were prone to conscious and unconscious distortion and misuse stemming from the observers' own background and predilections. The accuracy of their studies was rarely called into question as it was presumed that direct contact with the Gypsies gave an insight into the people and their way of life unobtainable in any other way.

From this brief review of some of the key writers using early interview and participant observation techniques, it is apparent that firsthand testimonies from Gypsies and personal experience have resulted in very different findings and conclusions. The Gypsies' own words have been used both to confirm and to deny their separate identity, to illustrate their separate culture and to reject it. Transcripts of supposed conversations show them to be both highly articulate and

severely illiterate, religious and amoral, superstitious and pragmatic, romantic and parasitical. This raises the inevitable question whether personal observation and contact allow for objective and factual reporting or merely serve to confirm already-existing prejudices through the selective perception and interpretation of the observer.

Much of this discussion has focused on a major, perhaps *the* major, source for Gypsies: works produced by the 'expert' Gypsiologists, many of whom employed participant observation techniques for their studies. While the nature of their representation and definition of Gypsies is crucial to this study, in part because of the influence of such texts in informing and leading the wider opinion and images of the group, this should not lead to the neglect of the considerably broader body of official, political, cultural and visual sources which, over time, have also played their part in forming and reformulating the Gypsy identity. It remains to provide an overview of the main body of works to be used in this study and to consider what has already been said about the representations they offer.

For the early modern period research into Gypsy life is forced to rely on a relatively narrow source base, consisting primarily of official and state papers and also a body of writing which has come to be known as 'rogue literature' because of its focus on criminals, the underworld and 'low life'. Identification of, and access to, these sources has been greatly facilitated by the worthy endeavours of the late nineteenth-century Gypsy lorists who over a sustained period managed to uncover a considerable number of items which contained references to Gypsies, which they then helpfully reproduced in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*. In the 1911 edition of the journal it was reported that a Mr F.S. Atkinson had taken on the formidable task of working through all printed parish registers for Gypsy entries.[67] His success, or otherwise, in this venture is not recorded. Similarly, the work of Henry Crofton and T.W. Thompson cannot fail to impress for the way in which they managed to unearth many obscure sources which carried some mention of Gypsies, even if only a single comment or note of a baptism. The lorists made full use of the many county and municipal histories published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, recording such vignettes as 'item payed for drynke geven to the Egiptians'.[68] Paradoxically, the thoroughness of their research has meant that many subsequent writers have run shy of conducting their own searches. Gamini Salgādo's chapter on Gypsies in his book on the Elizabethan underworld, for example, was written largely from articles and entries in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*.[69] It is of course possible that further material is still to be discovered, but this awaits systematic investigation.

While there exists a fairly substantial body of works for the period from the early sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth, the same cannot be said for the subsequent period up to the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, this is a curious time, in which mention of Gypsies in political or cultural sources remains remarkably slight. When Gypsies do appear in fiction, the dominant

representation is as rogues and vagabonds, carrying on the tradition established by the rogue literature of earlier times.[70] It remains true that no substantial body of representational texts, whether official or literary, exists for these particular years. It is no coincidence that this is an absence which leaves the group to a large extent invisible and has resulted in the almost total neglect of this period in the histories that have been written. With the current research of David Smith, an independent scholar with links to the Centre de Recherches Tsiganes, primarily based around local records, this neglect, absence and silence are beginning to be challenged and a history of responses to the group in this period is emerging which seems to stand in marked contrast to the hostility and persecution which preceded and followed it.

As we approach and enter the nineteenth century the number and range of sources expand widely and rapidly, with many drawn to the group from motives which varied from evangelism and social investigation to policing and a romanticised fascination with an exotic people. Many commentators even refer to this period as the time when the study of, and interest in, the Gypsies reached a peak. Explanations for this suggest that an important stimulus was provided by the ideas of the French Revolution and the Romantic movement in the Arts, noting that such eminent figures as Liszt and Brahms were among those who fell under the Gypsy spell. The change was not only in the quantity of works but also in their tone and nature:

> From being known as outlaws, felons and child-snatchers, they almost overnight became mysterious harbingers of romance and legend, endowed with almost supernatural powers.[71]

The period begins with the work of Heinrich Grellmann, and although his treatise will not be known to many outside the specialist field, it directly and indirectly influenced a range of nineteenth-century writers. As the century progressed, the number of monographs which took the Gypsies as their focus escalated rapidly. Gypsies were pursued into their camps and tents by evangelists, philologists, social investigators and, especially, by the Gypsy lorists, all eager to supplement book learning and common knowledge or hearsay with personal experience and firsthand accounts. Articles appeared in such diverse publications as *The Barrovian,* a publication for Barrow School, the *Illustrated London News, Baily's Magazine of Useful Sports, The Idler* and many others. The nineteenth-century interest in Gypsy studies by a number of enthusiasts whose passion for either Christian or social reform, linguistics or folk lore had led them into this field set the tone for the study of the group. They have provided a substantial body of works which have become an essential source for any researcher, set a thematic framework and methodological approach which was to be repeated in many subsequent works, and have influenced the way that Gypsies are seen, understood and treated today. Although the names of the

'specialists' are not generally known in the public domain, the influence of their works in forming attitudes about the group is incontestable.

Alongside the broadly defined 'genre' of Gypsy studies, sources from the modern period have often been arranged by type in order to analyse whether specific types of sources favoured particular representations of Gypsies. The major groupings, other than those described under the heading of Gypsy studies, are those produced by the state and its representatives, cultural, investigative/reportage, reference works, and self-produced material by Gypsies themselves.

Official sources

Probably the most numerous and certainly those with the longest historical roots are the records, reports, statutes and other material generated by the state and its many institutions and personnel. For the early modern period, legislation directed against the Gypsies provides the most obvious and visible of all extant sources from that time. But statutes provide only the tip of the official iceberg. Alongside these can be found references to Gypsies in reports of Select Committees, *Hansard,* police and health inspector reports, censuses, registers of births and marriages, and in the records kept of crimes and punishments, deaths, burials, baptisms, poor law payments and vagrancy which are located in local archives, Session Rolls, County Records and Constables' books. The multiplicity of official sources stems from the way in which the existence of Gypsies, and of other nomads, in the modern state cuts across a range of departments dealing with, for example, planning, housing, social services, environmental health and education.[72]

Furthermore, it should be remembered that much of the official documentation relates to the forming or implementation of legislation designed to curb, control, inspect, restrict and outlaw the Gypsy way of life. Mention of Gypsies in such sources is therefore necessarily a consequence of their actual or perceived position and status as a social problem. The major significance of official sources is to be found in the way they can give legitimacy to specific definitions and in their shaping of responses to the group.

Cultural sources

From the time of the Gypsies' first appearance in England in the early sixteenth century, they have been a favourite subject of writers, poets, artists and playwrights, providing us with a broad cultural milieu in which images of Gypsies constantly appear. Under this cultural grouping can be located various types of literature (children's, high brow, railway and comics), visual sources (fine art, cartoon, film and photograph), language and music/lyrics.

The number and range of novels, plays and poems in which Gypsies feature as main or incidental characters is vast. Among the best known to have included the Gypsies in their works are D.H. Lawrence, Victor Hugo, Cervantes, George

Eliot, Matthew Arnold, Walter Scott, Jane Austen, John Clare and the Brontë sisters. They usually appear as child-stealers, villains and seducers, or else as incidental figures who provide fleeting romantic interest or testify to the appeal of the open road.[73] But as well as the 'high-brow' fiction of this type there are many 'penny dreadfuls' and railway novels with Gypsy themes whose authors remain largely unknown or forgotten. The Haldane Half-Holiday Library even ran what might be described as a mini-series of stories about Gypsy princesses and brides. Diana Tong has written that '[m]ost novels and poems with Gypsy themes serve up a poisonous brew of racism and misogyny. The Gypsies are portrayed negatively or romantically in all kinds of fiction…but the real people behind the myths are absent.'[74] Here Tong is repeating a popular view of the representation of Gypsies in fiction, playing the idea of myth against reality, of positive imagery against negative. While such an approach is both understandable and accurate up to a point, it cements the association between fiction writing and myth-making but in so doing implies, without justification, a match between non-fiction and fact, as well as ignoring the range of fictional imagery. Further, it suggests a static duality of representation which obscures the significance of shifts over time.

Among the available literary sources can be found the genre of children's fiction, a particularly valuable area for research into the representation of Gypsies.

In the enormously useful volumes of Gypsy Bibliography compiled by Dennis Binns are many references to children's books which include Gypsy characters in the story. Nor is this a purely English phenomenon, as shown by Jean Kommen's study of the portrayal of Gypsies in Dutch children's books of the nineteenth century.[75] It is generally thought that children's fiction provides the basis of both negative, defamatory and fear-inspiring images and also a more romantic view of a handsome group, with the women dressed in colourful flamenco dresses, working as entertainers with tambourines and trained bears.[76]

In the twentieth century songwriters have echoed the fictional representations of Gypsies and numerous references can be found in popular music which attest to the mystery and allure of the group. Many non-Gypsies even use the label 'Gypsy' for themselves in order to exploit the traditional associations of Gypsies with musicality and also, as with Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsies, to take advantage of the wild, bohemian imagery. Images of Gypsies dancing around fires, casting Gypsy curses and providing a love interest or symbolism for the open road have been staples for songwriters for generations, spanning all cultures. Jimi Hendrix, who was in his own words hypnotised by those Gypsy eyes, was just one of many musicians to use Gypsy references in his songs.[77]

Reference texts and journals

Dictionaries and encyclopaedias often provide the first point of call for information on any topic, Gypsies included. They remain the standard reference

books, used well beyond the period in which they were written, and have a weight of authority not usually given to other texts. In a recent study of Gypsies as portrayed in Dutch encyclopaedias, the authors, Wim Willems and Leo Lucassen, make a strong argument for locating the entries in the context of the time of their production. They write:

> Encyclopaedias function only as a 'channel' for the existing knowledge about Gypsies. They show what is considered the objective opinion of the moment. A critical examination of the sources is often left out by the editors. Consequently, both the prejudiced and unprejudiced views belonging to a certain period can be deduced from the entries.[78]

However, this need to critically read the entries in order to identify the subjectivity behind the representation is not recognised by most. Willems and Lucassen argue further that the entries are then taken at face value by the upper and educated classes and provide the foundation of policy-making towards the group. While there is undoubtedly a measure of truth in this assertion, and accepting that encyclopaedias certainly occupy a position of unusual importance because of their authoritative reputation, it is also true that they are just one source among many. The educated and middle classes are as likely to obtain their information on the group from instantly accessible fiction and periodicals as from an encyclopaedia.

In terms of the representations of Gypsies there is a striking similarity between the Dutch and English experience, both in terms of the general trends and shifts, with the nineteenth-century emergence of racial categorisation and language, as well as the focus on such themes as origins, history and rites. Whilst I am unable to claim comprehensive analysis of British encyclopaedia entries to match the work of the two Dutch historians, it is evident from sampling that some major differences exist. In the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia* for 1830, accompanying physical descriptions which emphasise dark complexion, white teeth and fine black eyes are negative images which portray the group as rude, illiterate, uncultivated, cowardly, cannibalistic, deceitful, heathen, amoral and depraved. A similar account appeared in *Chambers' Encyclopaedia in 1863,* with descriptions of their character as cowardly, revengeful, treacherous, dirty and lazy, and accusations that they consorted with robbers and thieves and ate their parents. In marked contrast is the contribution of Francis Hindes Groome, a noted Gypsy lorist, to *Chambers' Encyclopaedia in 1893.* Here the Gypsies were seen as a gifted race, quick-witted, courteous, likeable, trustworthy and generous. The worst sins of which they could be accused were that they were passionate, boastful, crafty, superstitious and thriftless. Shared with the 1830 entry was a physical description which emphasised dazzling teeth, thoughtful brows, finely made hands and feet, and dark lustrous eyes.

Dictionary entries are also said to be impregnated with prejudice, and because of their sober, factual language and status as reference works they serve to fix and amplify those prejudices:

> Prejudices and stereotypes have by now found their way into dictionaries, which, just because they are reference works, further establish and extend them…. It is the usual circle of cause and effect: dictionaries, books and the popular press feed on public opinion, turn bits and pieces of fashionable images into official truths, and then reissue them to a public that finds confirmation of its opinion in the authoritative dictionary and prestigious press.[79]

The gap between reference texts and popular journalism was a narrow one and ideas and information cross-fertilised between the two. It was mentioned previously that sources on Gypsies were not as rich as they might first appear because the apparently large number of works concealed a high proportion of short journal articles. While there can be no denying this, it is also the case that journals and periodicals provide extensive material for the researcher, and one of the most startling aspects of this is the extraordinary variety of periodicals which carried, often on more than one occasion, articles on the English Gypsy population. Magazines concerned with religious affairs, outdoor leisure, popular pastimes, high-class living, women, politics, literature and culture, the arts and science, all, at some time, have featured articles on the Gypsies.[80] Interestingly, many of the articles talk of the pleasures of an outdoor existence, reflecting the vogue for caravanning which flourished in the early twentieth century and was enthusiastically reported in such periodicals as the *Tatler, Country Life, Health Resort,* and *The Woman at Home*.[81] Gypsy life was presented in these sources as the

model of good health, strength, vigour and naturalness. In this way periodicals became a major avenue for writing on Gypsies to be brought to all sections of the reading population, of all ages, classes and interests.

Investigative /reportage

Local and national newspapers have always provided a fruitful research source, and within the Gypsy archives at Liverpool and Leeds are volumes of press cuttings which offer a large if not comprehensive sample of journalistic reporting over an extended period of time. It is commonly believed that newspapers concentrate on the negative, portraying Gypsies in a hostile light as a result of their alleged criminal activities and dirty, encroaching encampments, and that the press are prepared to report prejudiced comment from the public or elected representatives without comment.[82] This component of press reporting is undeniable and, indeed, it was from the information supplied by a press-cuttings agency that statistical tables of Gypsy crimes were published in the *Journal of*

the Gypsy Lore Society in the early twentieth century.[83] As noted by Thomas William Thompson, one of the most prolific of all the Gypsy lorists, '[t]he vast majority of the news-cuttings, and those upon which most reliance can be placed, deal with such perversities, sins, and crimes of the British gypsies as brought them into contact with the law'.[84] The same point was again made by Donald Kenrick and Siân Bakewell in their 1990 publication for the Runnymede Trust, where they accuse the popular and local press of sensational headlines linking Gypsies with vandalism, evictions, clashes with the police, local protests, crimes, frauds and illegality.[85]

This, though, is to adopt a partial and uneven view of press reporting. Almost equally in evidence in the press-cuttings files in the Scott Macfie Collection are stories of Gypsy Queens and Kings, forced ejections, employments and trades, origins, fortune telling exploits, biographical portraits, wedding ceremonies, deaths, burials and harassment.[86] Thus alongside headlines of Gypsy plagues, nuisances and quarrels can be found those presenting the Gypsies in a more favourable light. The Gypsy lorists seemed as adept at using the pages of newspapers to advertise their views as those who wished to condemn the Gypsy nuisance and menace. In recent years press reporting shows the same duality. Alongside stories of illegal Gypsy immigrants, benefit scroungers and false claims for asylum, all wrapped in the language of flooding and swamping, can be found stories that provide a far more sympathetic and balanced portrait of the group. Positive reporting in such papers as the *Guardian* and the *Independent* has been a noticeable development, with regular articles and features dealing with persecution at home and abroad, and which occasionally give a direct voice to travellers themselves and their demands for civil rights.[87]

It should be apparent from this brief review of sources that images, definitions and representations of Gypsies are constantly being reproduced in the full range of political and cultural discourse, and, as commented by Ian Hancock, 'because (at any time) the most recent writings about Gypsies rest in large part upon what has already been said before, certain aspects of the mythical identity are reinforced through repetition'.[88] It is also evident that, with very few exceptions, the group is being defined and represented by outsiders rather than by Gypsies themselves:

> Almost every single bit of information available to the general public is in the form of observations made about Gypsies by non-Gypsies. The amount of material by Gypsies themselves which deals with Romani culture, while growing steadily, is still small and not easily accessible.[89]

'Outsider' sources cover the full spectrum, and although grouping these by type has certain advantages it would be a mistake to assume that any two versions of the same type of source will offer the same picture. Rather the 'four faces' of the Gypsy identified in the opening section of this chapter can be found in almost every one of the sources outlined above.

In trying to assess the different versions given to Gypsy identity it is tempting to give more weight to a work based on scholarly research than to a novel, to investigative reporting than to a work of art, to a photograph than to a cartoon, to a reference text such as an encyclopaedia than to a comic, and to personal observation than to rumour and hearsay. Two points need to be made. First, *all* representations play a role in creating and maintaining Gypsy identity. A cartoon, seen by thousands, is likely to have more impact on the popular imagination than a scholarly text read by hundreds. Second, there is a danger in assuming that value-free and objective comment will be found in certain texts and sources but not in others. All sources demand the same degree of critical attention because all forms of representation have the potential for bias and subjectivity, even though this may not be immediately apparent. Each of the arenas for representation identified earlier imposes its own constraints on the kind of image to be presented – whether, for example, it is for entertainment, information, education or as the basis of policy The perspective of the author of an official report will differ from that of the romantic novelist or the student of folklore and customs.

In some cases the bias and subjectivity of the writer are evident to even the most uncritical of readers. The example of the early to mid nineteenth-century works of Samuel Roberts highlights the importance of considering the writer/representer as a first step towards understanding the content of the writings and the specifics of the representation. Roberts' background and his vision of the world, which was evidently distorted through Christian spectacles, led to a particularly idiosyncratic image of the Gypsies. His writings on this subject, if discussed at all, are easily dismissed as unfounded speculation derived from a Christian subjectivity rather than objective research.[90] While such an obvious influence is not apparent in the works of everyone, it is nevertheless the case that Roberts was not alone in allowing his vision of the Gypsies to be coloured by other factors and influences. In some instances, though, especially when presented under the imprint of scholarly study or objective fact, distortion is difficult to identify. The nineteenth-century Gypsiologists were keen to present their work as the product of serious and scientific investigation, and many accepted their reassurances of objectivity and took their work at its face value. Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the lorists were very firmly located within the parameters set by contemporary racial thinking and were as much limited, constrained and determined by the existing state of knowledge and their own priorities and concerns as any evangelistic tract or official report. Writing can also be shaped as much by the location of its publication as by the background of the author and the constraints of the period. The concerns and focus of the anthropologist will not be the same as those of the sociologist, and a journalist from the *Sun* will file a different report to one from the *Independent.* Maybe, as Willy Guy observed, '[i]n an important sense the study of Roms is worthwhile not so much for its own sake but for what it reveals about the nature of the societies in which they lived and still live'.[91]

Clearly the enormity of the number of potential sources and the need to look at the variety of ways of reproducing group identity mean that this study can only cover a sample, inevitably raising questions concerning representativeness. It is my intention to approach and hopefully reduce these problems by undertaking an historiographical mystery tour which will primarily focus on key representations and their influential backers and sponsors, whose ideas and images can be found reproduced in such popular cultural forms as newspaper cartoons, romantic novels, song lyrics, paintings, 'penny dreadfuls', 'high-brow' literature and film, as well as the more obvious academic papers, monographs and official sources.

It is hoped that this present study will serve as a further contribution to the incomplete picture of Gypsy history in England and also to the controversial issue of identity, and by concentrating on a particular theme, identity, the inadequacies of general histories will not be repeated here.

Notes

1 T. Acton, 'Introduction', in Thomas Acton and Gary Mundy (eds), *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield, 1997).
2 Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London, 1997), p. 294.
3 Heinrich Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies, being an Historical Enquiry Concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, Customs and Conditions of this People in Europe, and their Origin,* translated by M. Raper (London, 1787).
4 Elwood B. Trigg, 'Magic and religion among the Gypsies of Great Britain', D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1967; Elwood B. Trigg, *Gypsy Demons and Divinities: The Magical and Supernatural Practices of the Gypsies* (London, 1975). Rather surprisingly, Trigg is described as having written 'probably the most comprehensive account of their history in Britain'. See Colin Holmes, 'Samuel Roberts and the Gypsies', in Sidney Pollard and Colin Holmes (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire (Sheffield,* 1976), pp. 233–246.
5 Diana Tong, *Gypsies: A Multidisciplinary Annotated Bibliography* (New York and London, 1995), p. 3.
6 Farnham Rehfisch (ed.), *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers* (London, 1975), p. vii.
7 Willems also hints at a continuing problem within Gypsy studies when he asks why scholarship on Gypsy history has changed so little and why the ethnographical perspective retains such a stranglehold. See Willems (1997), p. 301.
8 Zoltan Barany, The poverty of Gypsy studies', *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the AAASS (American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies),* Vol. 30, No. 3, May 2000. See also Zoltan Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge, 2002), especially pp. 6–9.
9 See Colin Clark, 'What poverty? A response to Zoltan Barany', *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the AAASS,* Vol. 40, No. 5, November 2000, p. 7; Thomas Acton, 'Response to Zoltan Barany's "The poverty of Gypsy studies"', *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the AAASS,* Vol. 40, No. 5, November 2000, pp. 8–9. See also Thomas Acton (ed.), *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle: Commitment in Romani*

Studies: A selection of papers and poems to celebrate Donald Kenrick's seventieth year (Hatfield, 2000); Zoltan Barany, 'In defense of disciplined scholarship: a response from Professor Zoltan Barany', *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the AAASS,* Vol. 40, No. 5, November 2000, pp. 9–12.

10 T. Acton, Susan Caffrey, Sylvia Dunn and Penny Vinson, 'Gender issues in accounts of Gypsy health and hygiene as discourses of social control', in Acton and Mundy (1997), pp. 164–165.

11 The wish of the Gypsy lorists for their studies to be seen as respectable and serious is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

12 See David Nemeth, '"To preserve what might otherwise perish": the JGLS, Gypsy studies, and a new challenge', paper presented to the 6th Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, 1984 (Special Collection, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool).

13 One area in particular that has shown remarkable growth has been the study of Gypsies in Central and East Europe. This is perhaps explained by the numerical size of Gypsy populations in this region (as high as 10 or 11 per cent), and also because of the centrality of issues around nationality, minority rights and migration in communist and post-communist states.

14 Tong (1995), p. xiii.

15 Professor Thomas Acton, author of various works on Gypsies.

16 'The Social Construction of Minorities and their Cultural Rights in Western Europe', held at the University of Leiden, 12–14 September 1990. The three workshop themes were 'Religion and emancipation of ethnic minorities in Western Europe', 'The social construction of ethnic minorities' and 'Minorisation of travelling groups and their cultural rights'.

17 The first of these was held at the University of Greenwich on 29 and 30 March 1993. The aim of the seminars was that they should serve as a forum for academics, policymakers and Gypsy activists to share experience, information and knowledge, to locate their own work within a research tradition, and to relate academic research to current UK and European policy initiatives.

18 Willy Guy, 'Ways of looking at Roms: the case of Czechoslovakia', in Rehfisch (1975), p. 203. See also Holmes, 'Samuel Roberts', p. 234.

19 This criticism is especially valid in relation to many of the histories written by the nineteenth-century lorists but it is also a fault which can be found in the more recent works of, for example, Norman Dodds *(Gypsies, Didikais and Other Travellers,* London, 1966) and Jeremy Sandford *(Gypsies,* London, 1975). It is also a fault of which I am guilty. In my Select Bibliography for *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1988) I included chiefly those works which related specifically to the Gypsies and excluded the wider range of historical texts which both informed and shaped my study.

20 Paul Slack, 'Vagrants and vagrancy in England, 1598–1664', *Economic History Review,* 2nd Series, Vol. xxvii, 1974, pp. 360–379; G. Salgādo, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London, 1984); Lionel Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds', Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815–1985 (London,* 1988).

21 Panikos Panayi gives references to Gypsies on just seven pages and Colin Holmes on two. See Panikos Panayi, *Immigration, Ethnicity and Racism in Britain 1815–1945* (Manchester, 1994); Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island. Immigration and British Society 1871–1971* (Basingstoke, 1988).

22 Raphael Samuel, 'Comers and goers', in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (eds), *The Victorian City, Images and Realities,* Vol. 1 (London, 1976), pp. 123–160; A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men. The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560–1640* (London, 1985).
23 Notably M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–45* (Cambridge, 1991).
24 Samuel, 'Comers and goers'.
25 Colin Holmes, 'Samuel Roberts', pp. 233–246, and 'The German Gypsy Question in Britain, 1904–5', in K. Lunn (ed.), *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870–1914* (Folkestone, 1980).
26 Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds';* G. Behlmer, The Gypsy problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 2, Winter 1985, pp. 231–253.
27 The inaugural meeting was held at the Centre de Recherches Tsiganes, Université de Paris V, on 27 and 28 June 1992.
28 Grattan Puxon, *Rom: Europe's Gypsies* (London, 1973). The report was updated and republished as *Roma: Europe's Gypsies. The Minority Rights Group Report* No. *14* (London, 1987).
29 To be discussed in a later chapter.
30 Colin Holmes wrote in 1991 that 'it soon becomes clear that historians have paid little attention to immigration history'. See Colin Holmes, 'Historians and immigration', in Colin Pooley and Ian Whyte (eds), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants. A Social History of Migration* (London, 1991), p. 193.
31 *Ethnic and Racial Studies; Patterns of Prejudice; Race and Immigration; Race Today; New Community; Searchlight; Race and Class; Immigrants and Minorities.*
32 The issue of contested identity is not exclusive to the Gypsies. The Israeli state constantly redefines, for purposes of immigration law, who is a Jew. Likewise, English immigration legislation has regularly readjusted the parameters of Englishness.
33 A final example of the way in which social construction can be used relates to the much broader area of knowledge. An informative example can be taken from the social history of medicine and germ theory.
34 See E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York and London, 1983); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). See also Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (eds), *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester, 1989).
35 For example, Sage has a Culture, Media and Identity Series, and Routledge/UCL has a Race and Representation Series. See also the journal *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* (formerly *Journal of Ethnic Groups).*
36 For example, Open University courses on contemporary cultural studies take themes of representation and identity as central. Representation was a key theme of the Women's History Network Conference, 14–15 September 1996.
37 As examples, see David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds), *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations since 1800* (London, 1989); Ruth A.E. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis, 1993); Kathryn Woodward (ed.), *Identity and Difference* (London, 1997).

38 For example, in relation to Jews, see David Philipson, *The Jew in English Fiction* (Minneapolis, 1911); Brian Cheyette, *Construction of the 'ZJew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875–1945* (Cambridge, 1993); Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller *(eds), Jewish Presence in English Literature* (Montreal, 1990).
39 J. Okely, *The Traveller Gypsies* (Cambridge, 1983).
40 Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism* (London and Boston, 1974), pp. 53–93.
41 In particular, see Willie Reid, 'Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the folklorists', in Acton and Mundy (1997), pp. 29–37; Donald Braid, 'The construction of identity through narrative: folklore and the travelling people of Scotland', in Acton and Mundy (1997), pp. 38–66.
42 T. Acton (ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* (Hatfield, 1997).
43 Nicolae Gheorghe, 'The social construction of Romani identity', in Acton (1997), p. 161.
44 Willems (1997), chapter 2.
45 Heinrich Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies, being an Historical Enquiry, Concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, Customs and Conditions of these People in Europe, and their Origins,* translated into English by Matthew Raper (London, 1807); first published, London, 1787. The book went to seven editions, two of those in English, and three translations. Only two authors before him had written books entirely on Gypsies, Fritschius in 1660 and Thomasius in 1671. Grellmann's, though, was the first standard work on the subject and he 'became an authority for practically all who published works on Gypsies after him'. See W. Willems and L. Lucassen, 'The church of knowledge: representations of Gypsies in Dutch encyclopedias and their sources', in Matt T. Salo (ed.), *100 Years of Gypsy Studies. Papers from the 10th Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, North American Chapter, March 25–27, 1988* (Cheverly, Maryland, 1990), pp. 31–50. The work and influence of Heinrich Grellmann will be considered in more detail in a later chapter.
46 See John Hoyland, *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits and Present State of the Gypsies; designed to develope the Origin of this singular People, and to promote the Amelioration of their Condition* (York, 1816); James Crabb, *The Gipsies' Advocate; or Observations on the Origin, Character, Manners and Habits, of the English Gipsies; to which are added Many interesting Anecdotes on the Success that has attended the plans of several benevolent individuals who anxiously desire their conversion to God* (3rd edn, London, 1832). The similarity between Crabb and Grellmann extends not only to the content of the books but also to the very titles.
47 See the Bibliography for references to Borrow's works. See also the excellent bibliography and commentary by Michael Collie and Angus Fraser, *George Borrow. A Bibliographical Study* (Winchester, 1984).
48 For an account of the formation of the Gypsy Lore Society, see D. Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1988).
49 See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of the concept of ethnicity.
50 (London, 1996).

51 See J. Okely, in Acton and Mundy (1997), pp. 200–201. In particular, Fonseca seems to have relied heavily on Judith Okely (1983), Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992) and Anne Sutherland, *Gypsies: the Hidden Americans* (London, 1975).

52 For a list of extremely useful guides to sources, see the separate section in the Bibliography.

53 *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* Vol. 10, 9th edn.

54 Tong (1995), p. x. Some writers have been said to have 'less regard to the careful compilation of verifiable facts than to advocating (often quite passionately) the delights and charms of the people they are writing about'. See E. Davies, 'Defining a Gypsy', Gypsy Sites Branch, Department of the Environment, September 1984, p. 2. Similarly, Ian Hancock notes the following: 'The blind repetition of someone's statement without checking the original source is the mark of shoddy scholarship; perhaps it is felt that less rigor is needed in Romani studies than in other areas of research.' See Ian Hancock, 'Duty and beauty', in Acton and Mundy (1997), p. 184.

55 Tong (1995), p. x.

56 Okely, in Acton and Mundy (1997), pp. 200–201.

57 It has been suggested that the Gypsy illustrations for an article which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1851, drawn by F.W. Topham, bore a 'very suspicious resemblance' to his frequent drawings of bare-legged Irish girls. See 'Gipsey experiences.

By a Roumany Rai', *Illustrated London News,* 13 and 27 December 1851. Cuthbert Bede has identified the author as Tom Taylor. See also Cuthbert Bede, 'In Gipsy tents', *Notes and Queries,* 6th Series, Vol. 11, 6 November 1880, pp. 362–364.

58 Anne Sutherland, 'The American Rom: a case of economic adaptation', in Rehfisch (1975), p. 1; see also I. Hancock, 'The roots of inequity: Romani cultural rights in their historical and social context', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 3–20.

59 It is a common assertion that Gypsies have been largely absent from the actual processes of recording and recounting their own history, describing their lives, explaining their culture and defining their identity. This situation, while by no means unique or extraordinary, is perhaps more extreme than in the case of other minority groups. The issue of self-produced sources will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

60 Okely (1983); David Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Society* (Oxford, 1981).

61 Sibley (1981), p. viii.

62 A selection of his photographs were published in the glossy fashion/style magazine *Marie Claire* in September 1998, pp. 26–34.

63 Martin Block, *Gypsies: Their Life and their Customs,* translated by Barbara Kuczynski and Duncan Taylor (London and New York, 1939), p. 19.

64 Reverend George Hall, 'Preface to the Heron pedigree', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1913–1914, p. 83.

65 See the Bibliography for details of his publications. Similarly, the noted lorist Dora Yates, in her book of recollections of life as a Romani Rawnie, also took gifts of a turkey, black twist tobacco and cigarettes, silk kerchiefs and sweets. She concluded that, having donated her gifts, she left her first meeting with the Gypsies with, she hoped, 'mutual acceptance of one another as friends for life'. See Dora Yates, *My*

Gypsy Days: Recollections of a Romani Rawnie (London, 1953), pp. 15, 23. Yates was by no means alone in believing that she had gained easy admittance to the 'innermost circle of friendship'. See also Frank Cuttriss, *Romany Life. Experienced and observed during many years of friendly intercourse with the Gypsies* (London, 1915), p. ix.

66 Block (1939).

67 E.O. Winstedt, 'Notes and Queries No. 35: the Wood family outside Wales', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1910–1911, pp. 304–307.

68 Such histories include the Records of the City of Norwich, Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records, Hereford County Records, Extracts from the Sessions Rolls 1581–1698, and the Constable's Book for Helmdon 1653–1717.

69 Gamini Salgādo, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London, 1984).

70 Angus Fraser, 'Author's Gypsies', *Antiquarian Book,* February 1993, pp. 10–17.

71 E. Davies, 'Defining a Gypsy', p. 3.

72 For a most useful bibliographical guide, see D. Kennington, *Gypsies and Travelling People: A Select Guide to Documentary and Organisational Sources of Information* (Stamford, 1990).

73 For full details and references, see Fraser, 'Author's Gypsies'. See also D. Kenrick and S. Bakewell, *On the Verge. The Gypsies of England* (London, 1990), p. 22.

74 Tong (1995). See also Hancock, 'Duty and beauty'.

75 Unfortunately this is not available in English translation at the time of writing. Enquiries should be directed to the author, c/o PO Box 16875, 1001 RJ Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

76 Tong (l995); Kenrick and Bakewell (1990).

77 Other examples include Tom Ovans, The Night I Saw The Devil', from *Still In This World;* Kelly Joe Phelps, 'Fleashine', from *Sky Like A Broken Clock;* Richard Thompson, 'Gypsy Love Songs', from *Amnesia;* Tim Gibbons, 'Must A Been', from *Shylingo.*

78 Willems and Lucassen, 'The church of knowledge', p. 31.

79 Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History* (London, 1986), p. 141.

80 Articles dealing with planning issues, site provision and health have appeared in recent years in such diverse journals as *Journal of Social Policy, Local Government Chronicle, Roof, Europe 85, Surveyor, Building Design, Community Care, Town and Country Planning,* and many more. For full references, see D. Kennington, *Gypsies and Travelling People.*

81 A Caravan Club of Great Britain was first formed in July 1907.

82 'Prejudiced comment from residents and their elected representatives is generally unrestrained and is reported by the press without qualification.' See Sibley (1981), p. 145. Ulč makes a similar point, that Czechoslovakian media images also focus on issues of criminality, incest, illegitimacy and on the cunning and elusive qualities of the group. See O. Ulč, 'Gypsies in Czechoslovakia: a case of unfinished integration', *Eastern European Politics and Societies,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1988, pp. 306–332.

83 'Notes and Queries No. 38: British Gypsy Crimes 1908', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1910, pp. 239–240; 'Notes and Queries No 23: British Gypsy Crimes *1909', Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1910–191 l, pp. 157–159.

84 Thomas William Thompson, 'Affairs of Egypt 1909', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1911–1912, p. 113. See also H.T. Crofton, 'Affairs of Egypt 1892–1906', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1908, pp. 358–384.
85 Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), pp. 19ff.
86 See, for example, the Gypsy Press-cuttings File made by R.A. Scott Macfie in the Scott Macfie Collection, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool. Also, PRO HO45/10995 File 158231/15.
87 See, for example, Geoffrey Edwards, 'Fellow Travellers', *Guardian,* 30 May 1979. Angus Fraser noted that '[i]n the past couple of years, the press has devoted more attention to the subject, generally in a benevolent fashion'. See A. Fraser, 'The Travellers: developments in England and Wales, 1953–1963', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* Vol. xliii, Nos. 3–4, 1964, p. 110. See also *Independent,* 28 November 1997, p. 16; *Guardian Weekly,* 30 November 1997, pp. 24–25; *St Albans and Harpenden Review,* 16 October 1997; *Independent,* 14 November 1997, p. 8; *Independent,* 22 November 1997, p. 6; *Daily Mail,* 22 October 1997, p. 37. See also Ivor H.N. Evans, 'The English Gypsies and the press', unpublished typescript, 6pp., Scott Macfie Collection, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, MS 17.4.
88 Hancock then almost suggests a conspiracy when he says that '[w]riters of novels, film scripts, tabloid columns and so on—the most readily accessible sources of all to the general public—have also ensured that the true details about the Romani people remain hidden'. See Hancock, 'The roots of inequity', pp. 10–13.
89 *Ibid., p. 6.*
90 See Holmes, 'Samuel Roberts', pp. 233–246.
91 See Guy, 'Ways of looking at Roms', pp. 201–229.

3
Egyptians, land-pirates, moon-men and vagabonds
The Gypsy in early modern England[1]

From the time of their first appearance in England in the early sixteenth century Gypsies have excited the attention of legislators, playwrights, novelists, artists, reformers and a diverse range of writers devoted to the scholarly study of the group. Inevitably this has generated a wide and varied body of written and visual sources in which the Gypsies feature as main or subsidiary characters. They have been portrayed and defined as being of separate, foreign or alien stock and as being just one unremarkable part of an indigenous, vagrant and vagabond population. Such representations date from the early modern period and can be found in two key forms of early modern writing: the official papers of the state and the distinctive genre of rogue literature. Significantly, they have found later expression in the descriptions of Gypsies as a race, an ethnic group and, simply, as vagrants.[2]

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries considerable effort was made by various members of the Gypsy Lore Society to uncover the 'early annals' of the Gypsies, with the result that the researcher has been provided with a readymade guide to a range of extant and often obscure sources which include some reference to the group.[3] Even so, Hubert Hall, a noted Gypsiologist, commented in 1928 that 'apart from a few Acts of Parliament and Orders of the Privy Council, the vicissitudes of the Gypsies are unnoticed in the main groups of Central Records which supply the most important materials for our political and constitutional history'.[4] While it is possible that further searches may uncover additional items, this statement remains broadly true and the fullest centrally generated, official references to Gypsies are to be found in the various statutes passed in order to curb, control and end their activities, way of life and presence in this country. The first of these was passed in 1530 in the reign of Henry VIII, followed by further legislation in 1554 and 1562.[5] In addition, instructions to implement the legislation were contained in a letter from Henry VIII's Chief Minister, Thomas Cromwell, to the Lord President of the Marches of Wales (1537), and concern about the difficulties of implementation was expressed in the address of Edward Hext, Justice of the Peace in Somerset, in 1596.[6]

Rogue literature, the other main source on Gypsies in the early modern period, is a generic label given to the wide-ranging works dating primarily from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but which also covers a distinctive body of writing in subsequent periods.[7] The texts vary in content from biographical portraits and gallows confessions to surveys and revelations of low life and all types of deceitful practices, and in their form from plays and verse to dramatic fiction and early examples of journalistic-style reportage.[8] The shared focus remains with the rogue, the vagabond and the criminal, and by combining moral indignation and outrage with an undisguised fascination with the colour and vitality of a picaresque lifestyle, the works undoubtedly made compelling reading for their contemporary audience. Within this genre only a small proportion contained direct references to Gypsies or Egyptians, and yet this remains a key source for the early history of the group. The significant status of this material is also maintained, and indeed reproduced, by later writers on Elizabethan England, despite the many doubts that exist about the authenticity and provenance of the accounts provided.

Descriptions and representations of Gypsies have emerged from these two sources, parliamentary acts and rogue literature, which have informed and influenced many later commentators and which also, as mentioned, have in some respects survived through to present-day perceptions of the group. These two types of sources, in many ways distinct, also show evidence of overlapping language, approach and descriptions, with both informing the shape, content and tone of the other in relation to the representation of the Gypsy group. In order to fully appreciate the meanings behind, and significance of, the first production of Gypsy images in this country, it is necessary to consider the sources in the context of their production. This involves, first, locating official records in relation to the wider vagrant and alien problem in the early modern period, and, second, reviewing the genre of rogue literature as a source not only on Gypsies but on the Elizabethan underworld in general.

The state, ‘outlandysshe’ strangers and immigrants

The numbers of those of foreign birth and ancestry dwelling in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remained very low. Christopher Hill refers to the ‘many migrants’ to England from the continent, Wales and Ireland, but admits that we have no indication of precise numbers.[9] The Jewish population, expelled in 1290 by Edward I, had progressively drifted back by the sixteenth century, though they were only to receive official recognition as a community in 1664.[10] The migration to England of Huguenots from the Low Countries and France, described as ‘England’s first minority of real significance in terms of size’, dates from the second half of the sixteenth century, but their numbers remained small and geographically concentrated, chiefly in London, Colchester, Canterbury and Norwich.[11] In one of the few texts which considers the early history of the black population in Britain, Peter Fryer suggests they have had a

continued presence for almost 500 years. However, their numbers remained extremely small throughout the sixteenth century and it was only in the second half of the seventeenth century that the figure was to increase with the arrival of African slaves brought over to work as servants, prostitutes and court entertainers.[12] Although individuals and small groups continued to enter Britain, there was no major influx until the middle of the nineteenth century.

With few exceptions the presence of Gypsies in England is usually dated from mention at an inquest in 1514 into the death of Richard Hunne in the Lollard's Tower of an Egyptian woman who had been lodging in Lambeth. It was said that she had been able to tell marvellous things by looking into hands but had since gone overseas.[13] Most subsequent commentators use this fragment to conclude that the Gypsy presence in England should be dated from this time. While it is reasonable to speculate from such written evidence, a number of questions are inevitably raised. Later records describe the Egyptians as wandering in rural areas in large bands, and so the urban lodging of an apparently single Egyptian woman sits uncomfortably with this later knowledge. Elsewhere it is noted that there was an influx of Gypsies into England twenty years into the reign of Henry VIII, although it is unclear whether this refers to the first arrival or a later migration. It is worthy of note that legislation against the group was passed in 1530, perhaps partly in response to the influx.[14] However, it has also been suggested that the date is incorrect and that Henry VIII was mistakenly printed instead of Henry VII. Twenty years into the reign of the latter would give a date for the entry or influx of Gypsies as around 1505, which coincides with other records of their first appearance in Scotland. Some commentators suggest a much earlier date, but again without any supporting evidence. It would also seem that by 1554 Gypsies were either returning to England, having previously fled or been deported, or perhaps were arriving for the first time. The Egyptians Act of that year makes reference to those who 'have enterprised to come over againe into this Realme using their olde accustomed develeshe and noughty practices and devices', and a penalty of £40 was imposed on anyone found 'transporting, bringing or conveyeng' Egyptians into the country.[15] The difficulty, then, is that assertions about their first and subsequent appearances are based entirely on slight evidence or accounts given in unreliable sources.

Despite their small numbers these groups of immigrants were to experience various forms of anti-alien activity. At the accession of Mary in 1553 all 'strangers' were commanded to leave the realm and, later, Elizabeth I was to use royal prerogative to expel all religious dissenters. The Huguenots, even though offering their skills as artisans, merchants and professional men in return for asylum, were to face outbursts of public, though not official or state-sanctioned, antipathy.[16] In the reign of Elizabeth I authorisation was given for the making of returns of strangers living in the capital and suburbs, but this was primarily a response to popular discontent and general economic depression. For reasons which combined fear of overpopulation and competition for scarce food resources with a concern about the spread of heathenism and a xenophobic

association of black with evil, in 1601 Elizabeth I ordered the deportation of all 'blackamoores', with the exception of court entertainers.[17]

It is sometimes claimed that, initially at least, the Gypsies received a positive welcome when they first appeared, partly resulting from the belief that they were on a religious pilgrimage and also because of the presence of high-sounding dukes, counts and lords among their group. In 1519 the Earl of Surrey is reported to have entertained the Gypsies at Tendring Hall in Suffolk and to have given them safe conduct. Also, it is said that they held letters of recommendation from both James IV and James V of Scodand.[18] However, it was not long before such apparent acceptance gave way to both popular and official intolerance. Within the space of a generation, the Gypsies came under the regulatory attentions of the state and were to feel the weight of a double-edged state paranoia rooted in a mistrust of strangers and aliens and a desire to punish and control the economically unproductive and masterless. Gypsies were seen and treated both as aliens who had migrated to England from distant lands as well as, at the same time, part of the much larger rogue and vagrant population. For Luke Owen Pike, a Lincoln's Inn barrister and author of a two-volume history of crime in England, it was the latter aspect which was the more important:

> It was as vagabonds...that the gipsies were regarded when they first came prominently into notice in the reign of Henry VIII. It was not so much because they 'deceived people with palmistry' and were suspected of various felonies, that they were obnoxious, as because they went from 'shire to shire'.[19]

The state and vagabondage

As mentioned, as well as being strangers the Gypsies were also nomads and as such joined a migrant and itinerant population of early modern England that was diverse, fluid and periodically very numerous. It included persons wandering in search of employment, discharged soldiers, scholars and employees released from service following the dissolution of the monasteries as well as a range of individuals and groups for whom itinerancy was intrinsically linked to their means of earning a livelihood, such as tinkers, hawkers, strolling players, chapbook sellers and colporteurs. It also consisted of those who operated outside or on the borders of the law, such as highwaymen, passers of counterfeit coin, fortune tellers (whose activities were only criminalised in the sixteenth century), beggars and vagrants.[20]

While the presence of such a population is not peculiar to the early modern period, it is during this time that the problem is said to have worsened. A.L. Beier talks of 'exceptionally high' levels of migrancy in Elizabethan and early Stuart England[21] and one consequence of this, as noted by J.A. Sharpe, was that 'the vagrant emerged as *the* criminal stereotype in the late sixteenth century'.[22] Precise quantification of actual numbers or of percentage increases is not

possible from contemporary sources. It is certainly the case that such records as do exist show increased comment from officials and more prosecutions of members of the nomadic and migrant population, though this might simply represent heightened vigilance rather than being an indicator of higher absolute numbers. Despite this qualification, given the coincidence of factors likely to stimulate vagrancy and mobility, the likelihood is of a significant numerical increase in the period being considered.

Specific factors have been offered as explanation for this. First, the increase in migrancy was not a peculiarly English feature and should be understood as part of a much wider European phenomenon associated with the transition from feudalism to capitalism. This is to locate nomadism within the longer-term economic and demographic changes which contributed to increasing landlessness and the insecurity of wage labour. Added to this, it has been estimated that between 1500 and 1630 the population of England doubled, [23] with consequent pressures on food resources, prices and land, which were then further exacerbated by periodic harvest failures. This, accompanied by the shift in agrarian society from demesne farming to enclosure, the dissolution of the monasteries, the break-up of feudal households, inflation and the immigration of pauper vagrants from Ireland, further contributed to the sixteenth-century increase in landlessness, migrancy, poverty and vagrancy.

Although official antipathy to wanderers and nomads has an extremely long history, the period from 1560 to 1640 has been identified as the time when concern with vagrancy became 'one of the most pressing social problems of the age'.[24] This is illustrated by the numerous Acts of Parliament which were passed in relation to the unemployed, the landless, the poor, vagrant and nomadic. Indeed, these eighty years are said to represent the peak of state activity against vagrants in the 300-year period from 1400 to 1700. The reduced concern with the problem after *circa* 1660 has been variously attributed to changes in the system of poor relief whereby the vagrant, instead of being punished, was removed to his or her place of origin to receive statutory relief, greater prosperity, better demographic stability and a more stable political climate. This has resulted in one commentator stating that this was a period in which Gypsies enjoyed 'a rest from special oppression' even though they could still be proceeded against for crimes such as fortune telling and horse stealing.[25]

Clearly, part of the explanation for the increasingly hostile attitude of the state from 1560 to 1640 is to be found in the actual or perceived numerical increase of the vagrant, rogue and vagabond population.[26] However, for Beier the numbers issue is of less importance in his analysis than the fact of being masterless. As he states, 'they were masterless in a period when the able-bodied were supposed to have masters', and by turning to itinerancy they also broke with family, economic, religious and political conventions, perhaps leading to crime and rebellion.[27] Moreover, being masterless went with being unemployed and idle, the latter seen as both a concept and an (in)action which offended every sense of social order and of the 'common wealth'.[28] Equally important, the movement

from bound to free labour, or no labour, meant that traditional social relations, and with them mechanisms of social control, were being broken down. Masterless men, at the political, economic and ideological levels, thus came to be perceived as a danger to the established social order.

The emphasis on the notion of masterless men as the key to understanding state attitudes and responses is taken up by Leo Lucassen and linked to the work of Charles Tilly on state formation, capital and coercion.[29] Lucassen seeks to explain state policy towards Gypsies and, importantly, other migrant groups and so fill what is perceived to be a gap in scholarly investigation into the subject. In order to remedy this deficiency Lucassen's survey spans various European countries and covers a period of 550 years, from the Middle Ages to the eve of the modern industrial nations entering the First World War. At the risk of oversimplifying a complex argument and typology, it is useful to draw out the key strands which relate specifically to the early modern period.

Lucassen locates the official response to itinerancy and migrancy in the wider European setting. While there may have been specific conditions contributing to the heightening of the problem in particular periods in England, it is also the case that laws to restrict and curb all migrancy, except in the occasional circumstance where it was considered essential and productive, can be found across all periods and in all European societies. This therefore demands a movement from particular national circumstances, conditions and responses, to a wider perspective which draws in common, shared characteristics. The core argument is that stigmatisation and repression have to be located within the structural economic developments occurring from the Middle Ages onwards and related to the move from bound to free labour, and so from a feudal to a market-oriented capitalist system. Repression, by means of Vagrancy and Poor Law statutes, was a means of controlling the labour migration of so-called 'masterless men' and of ultimately binding them to capital. Lucassen adopts a sequential model which moves from economic dysfunctionality to the desire to control, and from this to stigmatisation and criminalisation. The final stage is reached when the group takes on the character given to it, and the process therefore becomes self-perpetuating. The only permitted migration was of pilgrims, emigrants, compagnonnage, colonists and seasonal labourers. Further, he expresses the view that the *extent* of repression depends on the functionality of migration and relations of capital and coercion. Repression is weakest in states with a capital-intensive economy, dependent on migrant labour, and strongest where capital is low and coercion is high.

The scope of this particular analysis leaves the reader breathless. Not only are we taken across many epochs and state boundaries but we are also provided with an analytical framework which draws on such major concepts as the transition from feudalism to capitalism, stigmatisation and criminalisation, the coercive powers of the state, the decline of patriarchal relations, nationalism and national identity. Any one of these forms the basis of lengthy historical debate and controversy. As a general typology and explanation of the state response to

migrancy and nomadism the analysis is both provocative and stimulating. Yet, as with any such wide-ranging and global analysis, it does raise some important questions. The transition from feudalism to capitalism was not the neat and uniform progression implied by the model, suffering as it did from false starts and lapses. Similarly, by linking repressive labour policies to the needs of capital, capitalism and a market-oriented system the argument is open to criticism concerning the validity of these labels in the early modern context. Finally, the idea that repression originated in, and can be explained by, the desire and need to control the economically dysfunctional groups within society is to exclude, or at least to reduce the significance of, other factors. The state, sensitive to its own security, feared that nomadism was politically, socially and ideologically, as well as economically, dysfunctional.

The early modern period was a time of rapid change and extreme religious and political uncertainty, resulting in an often ill-defined fear of anarchy, popular risings and anything which might threaten or disrupt the existing social organisation. Concern about the consequences of disease, pestilence, crime and poverty was matched by the threat of sedition and the belief that Rome was sending Papal emissaries to England to provoke a Catholic revival. The link between these fears and itinerancy and nomadism was all too evident to contemporaries. Disease and pestilence were spread by nomadic carriers, various crimes were closely linked to an itinerant way of life, poverty and vagrancy were virtually synonymous, sedition was spread by the itinerant colporteurs, and agents of the Pope were suspected of finding a cloak for their subversion in the camps of travellers and Gypsies. Paul Slack relates the fear of travellers in part to the 'new, or newly virulent' sixteenth-century diseases of syphilis and the sweating sickness, which led to the adoption of isolation and quarantine strategies to keep out strangers.[30] What is more, this section of the population presented the most amoral face of an uncivilised society, lacking any religion, ignoring acceptable codes of decency and engaging in all forms of promiscuous behaviour:

> Vagabonds became the scapegoats for all the social problems. They were carriers of rumour, sedition and disease, and they infected others with their 'licentious liberty'.[31]

It is of course impossible to unravel the various factors which contributed to the official concern as they overlapped and complemented each other. The reasons for the state's actions were to be found in a broad concern for law and order combined with a 'felt need to teach all citizens their duties to God, king and the commonwealth'.[32] The growth of an administrative apparatus was to make such intrusions possible. Religious intolerance and anti-Catholic sentiment combined with fears of sedition and a latent xenophobia to produce a state ever watchful for any form of dissent. One historian even characterises the political system of Tudor England as one of paranoia and writes of the 'inner and hidden spasms that

gripped the bowels'.[33] It is against this background that the vagrants, paupers and nomads were seen as offering the worst face of an uncivilised and unacceptable society with their lawlessness, heathenism, promiscuity and barbarism.

The diversity of this migrant population posed a major dilemma for the state. Mobility and migrancy were an inevitable consequence of regional variations in patterns of employment and of urbanisation. In this sense they were an essential component of demographic and employment shifts and the state had no wish to disrupt this self-regulatory mechanism. Equally, however, itinerancy and nomadism were the resort of the idle and feckless, the unproductive and masterless, the beggarly and parasitic. They also included those for whom a migrant and outdoor existence was a permanent and chosen way of life as well as those who only turned to it as a temporary, if often regular, measure forced by exceptional circumstances.

The problem facing the state was how best to combat the myriad of actual, imagined and potential problems among a group so varied in origins, habits and behaviour. Beier states that every member of the diverse itinerant population was perceived as a potential threat to the state: 'pedlars violated guild restrictions, military men knew how to use weapons, entertainers brought together crowds who rioted, healers infringed state-sponsored monopolies, clerks were literate and unemployed, and wizards possibly associated with the devil'.[34] Dangers and threats such as pauperism, criminality, parasitism, political opposition combined with marginalisation from the socialising influences and demands of the state. The difficulty facing officialdom was that no single problem could be ascribed to any one group. The lines distinguishing the respectable from the unrespectable and the productive from the unproductive were imprecise and often overlapping, with those genuinely seeking work forced to turn to begging and even crime to sustain an existence, and those pursuing trades as entertainers and tinkers not being entirely innocent of deceptions and theft.

The state found a solution to the problem by bringing within the framework of legislation everyone who temporarily or permanently took to an itinerant way of life. A.L. Beier notes that 'the catch-all definition of vagrancy dating from 1531 remained largely unaltered until 1597'.[35] Initially the Egyptian Acts were directed specifically at those coming into the realm and calling themselves Egyptians, but with the statutes of 1554 and 1562 they also came to include other persons commonly calling themselves Egyptians (1554), counterfeit Egyptians (1562), any who frequented their society or behaved like them (1562) and any who for one month at any one time or at several times was in their company (1562). Approaching the problem from the other, non-specific direction, the various Acts primarily concerned with vagrancy and, later, poor relief also progressively expanded their scope to absorb virtually all sections of the itinerant population. In relation to this study, the earliest relevant legislation was an Act of 1511–1512 passed in the reign of Henry VIII dealing with the vagabond population, which was then followed by a series of further enactments throughout the sixteenth century.[36]

Initially, concern seemed to be with specific groups or acts of vagabondism, such as the Egyptians, persons feigning knowledge of palmistry, fortune telling by means of the 'crafty sciences' of metoposcopy, aruspicy or hydromancy, and with tinkers and pedlars deemed 'more hurtfull than necessarie'.[37] An Act of 1531 defined the vagabond as 'any man or woman being whole and mighty in body and able to labour, having no land, master, nor using any lawful merchandise, craft or mystery whereby he might get a living'.[38] By 1572 the category of 'rogue' first appears in the statute book and 'rogues and vagabonds' in 1596, and the Elizabethan statute of 1597–1598 gives the following definition: 'all tynkers wandering abroade, and all such p'sons, not being fellons, wandering and p'tending themselves to be Egipcians or wandering in the habite, forme or attyre of counterfayte Egipcians'.[39] Those who came to be defined as rogues and vagabonds included Cheats and Sharpers, those engaged in Sham or vagabond Employments, Professors of Palmistry or Physiogonomy, Fortune Tellers, Prostitutes, Prowlers for Girls, Rapparees and Tories, Thieves, Instructors of Thieves and Retired Thieves. Also included within these main categories were such persons as thimble-riggers, minstrels, flower-sellers, quack doctors, highwaymen, Gypsies and Sham Gypsies. A.L. Beier has said of this all-encompassing definition: 'Possibly the laws' blanket coverage was intentional, designed to entrap the maximum available number of offenders. But it also reflected a conviction in the ruling elites that vagabondage was a hydra headed monster poised to destroy the state and social order.'[40] This progressive and extended blurring of the boundaries probably resulted from two main causes. First, as mentioned, it was both impossible and unnecessary to make any legal distinction between a vagrant, pedlar and Egyptian as the problem rested rather with the fact of their nomadism than their allegedly varied origins. Second, it reflected the changing nature of the nomadic population itself which occurred as the result of a highly probable, but unquantifiable, intermixing of the nomadic population, socially, economically and matrimonially.

In an attempt to neuter this monster the state set about criminalising groups and activities considered unacceptable for one reason or another. In effect the result was to create a nomadic underclass, or itinerant underworld, which while allowing some variation essentially saw them as part of a wider, common fraternity living on or outside the margins of the law and social acceptability. Categories of people, such as fortune tellers, healers, tinkers and pedlars, found that during the sixteenth century their practices were no longer welcomed or tolerated.[41] The only exception, in the case of the latter grouping, was if they were able to obtain a licence from two justices.[42] This process of criminalisation resulted in the attachment and spread of negative stereotypes to all those similarly labelled and grouped, and is seen as stigmatising this section of the population from both an official and a popular perspective.

The penalties for vagrancy, roguery, vagabondage and for being an Egyptian or counterfeit Egyptian were harsh and became progressively more severe throughout the sixteenth century Egyptians could be subjected to deportation,

seizure of their goods, imprisonment and execution simply for being Egyptians. Luke Owen Pike remarked that under Henry VIII idleness and vagabondage were made crimes in as high a degree as any offence except treason.[43] Penalties for vagrancy under the legislation of 1530–1531 included whipping, the pillory and having an ear cut off, and under the draconian statute of 1543 the vagrant could be enslaved, branded and put in chains. It was not until the latter part of the sixteenth century that the state developed an alternative system of combating vagrancy by seeking to remove, or at least alleviate, one of its main causes through the introduction of a system of poor relief.[44]

Mention of Gypsies in early modern official records was therefore framed by a perception of the group as both an alien problem and part of the broader population designated as roguish and vagabond. A survey of the state response to vagrancy, migrancy, itinerancy and nomadism identifies the origins and nature of official concern, and goes some way to explaining the representations given of the group. On the one hand, the state's attitude can be understood as a responsive action to the criminal and actual or potentially subversive or threatening ways to be found among at least a section of the mobile population. Equally, however, the state manufactured a problem rather than simply responded to one, as is to be seen in the criminalisation of previously legitimate activities and the erection of all-embracing categories in an attempt to reimpose authority and minimise any threat to the economic, ideological, religious or political status quo.

Rogue literature

Alongside official records, the other main body of source material on early modern Gypsies is to be found in the body of writing commonly known as 'rogue literature', described by Paul Slack as 'not quite social reportage and not quite picaresque novel, but a combination of the two'.[45] Works found within the genre include tracts, ballads, broadsheets and plays, and range from Robert Greene's Conny-Catching pamphlets, dramas by Ben Jonson and dictionaries of the 'vulgar tongue' from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the writings of George Borrow, Matthew Arnold and George Meredith in the nineteenth.[46]

A major part of the undoubted continued popularity of these pamphlets and plays must be found in the subject material. Stories of thieves, Egyptians, whores, criminals, cozeners, tricksters, sorcerers, witches and charmers held an easy attraction for a large audience, offering an irresistible combination of the exotic and alluring with the picaresque and threatening. A fascination with the underworld and the ways of its population and a voyeuristic interest in the behaviour of the low classes combined with a desire to understand and then curb, control and reform the dangerous and threatening elements of society. These tales of crimes, immorality and the supernatural proved as appealing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as they are today. With this in mind, the problems concerning the veracity of the writing become more understandable.

The temptation to write what it was known would sell proved too much for the early modern equivalent of the hack writer. Despite claims to objectivity and accuracy by the authors, their works have been more usually been condemned, by contemporaries as well as by later commentators, for their plagiarism, sensationalism, romanticism, exaggeration, imagination, invention and generalisation.

Within this genre, whose peak unsurprisingly coincided with that of vagrancy, only a relatively small number carry references to Gypsies, and then often just as brief sections. Even so, these works have been plundered by later writers investigating the early history of Gypsies and their influence in forming a particular representation of the Gypsy population is evident in many later texts and discourse. While the following observations are broadly applicable to many, if not the majority, of the works identified as falling within the genre, the focus will remain on those which contain reference to Egyptians, and so include publications by Andrew Boorde (or Borde), Thomas Dekker, John Awdeley, Thomas Harman and Samuel Rid.

In 1547 Dr Andrew Boorde, a Carthusian monk, published a small pamphlet entitled *The fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge,* which has subsequently achieved a degree of recognition and notoriety among Gypsy scholars as it apparently contained a short chapter providing a list of Gypsy words and phrases and their English translations.[47] This is usually seen as the first attempt in English to investigate linguistic differences between the Egyptians and the native population. The account was even thought to be given a note of authenticity by the unusually large presence of words and phrases relating to drinking and alcohol, suggesting that the words were picked up from a firsthand encounter in an alehouse. However, doubts were raised by the Gypsy lorist Henry Crofton:

> As might be expected, when it is taken into account that Dr Borde was noting down sounds, the exact meanings of which he did not know, and his notes were printed after his death, many mistakes have been made in the Romanes, but it also seems probable that his informant was a British gajo, who consorted with Gypsies, and whose knowledge of Romanes was imperfect.[48]

Doubts about whether the meeting ever took place, whether Boorde himself conversed with Gypsies, or whether his informant was a *gajo* who consorted with Gypsies, must all, unfortunately, remain conjecture. All that can be confidently asserted is that it was believed at the time that the Gypsies spoke a language which differed both from that of the native population and from the canting language associated with the vagrant population.

Fourteen years after the first publication of Andrew Boorde's study of language appeared, what is often taken as the first English account of the vagrant community, *The fraternitye of vacabondes,* was probably first printed in 1561. The authorship of this particular work is in some doubt, with the Bodleian

Library listing the 1575 title under Thomas Harman and as printed by I. Awdeley, though the consensus among later commentators is that it was written by John Awdeley.[49] It had been thought that this volume plagiarised Harman's *A Caueat or Warening for Commen Cursetors* until it was shown by Furnivall that *Fraternitye* actually preceded it and the question of influence or plagiarism became reversed.[50] But even this did not free either Awdeley or *Fraternitye* from the charge, and attempts have been made to establish connections between this and two previous works. The first of these was *Liber Vagatorum,* a study of German vagrants and beggars, first published about 1512, edited by Martin Luther in 1528, though not receiving an English translation until 1860.[51] In this, the vagrant and beggar community was divided into twenty-eight classes according to the different ways used to cheat and rob the unsuspecting. The second is said to be Sebastian Brandt's *Shyp of Folys,* published in 1508, an English translation of Brandt's *Narrenschiff* of 1494 which is described as a 'general and artificial satire'.[52] It is noticeable that the works of Awdeley, and also of Harman, compare in scope, aims and arrangement with the German volume, and that the tricks described are identical.[53] While this inevitably raises important doubts, the case of plagiarism has not been proven. There is no evidence that Awdeley or Harman would have been able to read the German language even if they had come across the book, and it is of course possible that the content of the volumes showed similarities because the subject matter was the same and the behaviour and practices of the vagrant population in Germany did not markedly differ from those in England.[54] Even so, the second section of *Fraternitye* is accused by one commentator of departing from reality and of giving only superficial treatment to the material.[55]

Next in this sequence came the writings of Thomas Harman, which are generally seen as providing the basis for much of the later rogue literature, especially that of Thomas Dekker, Robert Greene and Richard Head.[56] Thomas Harman is usually treated as the major writer on the subject, and is said to have written 'the best sixteenth century account of vagabondage and roguery'. A.V. Judges, in his classic collection of works on the Elizabethan underworld, continues with his praise and says that Harman had the deftness of a trained sociologist, that he had no axe to grind, and that he compared, classified, noted, recorded details and avoided moralising. In short, we are told, 'his account may be accepted as genuine and in most particulars correct'. Harman collected his information first hand, having been forced through ill health to spend much of his time at his home in Crayford, near Dartford, Kent, from where he was able to observe the comings and goings of the wayfaring community and to interview any who happened to call at his door. His 1567 book *A Caueat or Warening for Commen Cursetors vulgarely called Vagabones* is said to have become 'a rich quarry to be plundered by subsequent writers on roguery…. Nearly all the later tracts…owe something to its stimulus, even where they do not borrow outright.'[57] However, some doubts can be cast on the originality of this work. There can be no doubt that he was familiar with Awdeley's writings, if not the

German studies mentioned earlier, and Chandler offers a less than complimentary assessment of his work, describing it as a 'collection of anecdotes based upon hearsay or experience and clustered about a list of twenty-three criminal orders. These repeat most of Awdeley's and several others'.[58] Similarly, he is accused by Paul Slack of dramatising the rogue, exaggerating his eccentricity and of romanticisation. Although his descriptions are rooted in a measure of fact, Harman also 'selected, shaped and gilded his material, to give it a clear structure and provide amusement for his readers'.[59]

Robert Greene, author of the Conny-Catching series, is accused by Aydelotte of plagiarism and inaccuracy, a view endorsed by Gamini Salgādo, who also added that many of Greene's moral sentiments were lifted 'more or less verbatim', largely from Harman.[60] Despite this, his works are said effectively to convey the atmosphere of rogue life and vividly and brilliantly to 'bear on their face the stamp of truth'.[61] The pamphlets by Thomas Dekker and Samuel Rid come in for a more unequivocally harsh treatment. Although *The Bell-man of London* was published anonymously, Dekker's authorship is considered to have been established by his signature to the companion volume *Lanthorne and Candlelight.*[62] He is thought not to have been familiar with the subjects of his work and the pictures given are considered inaccurate even though he was heavily influenced by both Harman and Greene, a fact commented upon by his contemporary Samuel Rid in the introduction to *Martin Mark-all. Lanthorne and Candlelight,* described as 'unblushing plagiarism' by both Chandler and Judges, is also said to contain characters who would be 'more at home in Dekker's pages than they would be in real life'.[63] Again, though, some praise of Dekker manages to filter through by virtue of his skills as a writer. The summary by Aydelotte seems to reflect the general opinion:

> a typical hack writer, following the fashion, writing what would sell, unscrupulous in borrowing other men's work, but brilliant in patching it together and dressing it out in the showy rhetoric which Elizabethans loved.[64]

As was the case with *Fraternitye,* the authorship of *Martin Mark-all* has been the subject of some speculation. The initials, given on the title page, of S.R. have led some commentators in the direction of Samuel Rowlands and others towards Samuel Rid.[65] Perhaps the most convincing case is presented by Frank Aydelotte, who notes the similarities between this volume and a slightly later publication written by Samuel Rid, entitled *The Art of Iugling and Legerdemaine.* In this case the similarity is not that sections have been borrowed but rather that one volume picks up where the other leaves off. Accepting that the author is Rid, his attack on Dekker for plagiarism rings rather hollow from a writer who is guilty of 'wholesale pilfering' himself and was thought to be more shameless in this activity than many others.[66] The main sources for *Iugling* were Harman and Reginald Scot's *Discouerie of Witchcraft,* published in 1584, from which Rid

copied sections verbatim, and Gilbert Walker's *A Manifest Detection of Diceplay (*1552).[67]

It is evident, then, that most commentators are justifiably unanimous in their caution and criticisms regarding the body of rogue literature. John Richetti describes it as combining the picaresque tale with a 'journalistic instinct for the notorious and sensational', and sees what is preserved of the portrait of the underworld and criminal low life as 'nothing more than an exotic place where mythological simplicities prevail'.[68] A.V. Judges, in his excellent collection of Tudor and early Stuart tracts and ballads, allows for a measure of close observation by the writers on roguery, but also adds that they combine romanticism and sweeping generalisations with their imaginative impulses, and he states that 'the pamphleteers of the Elizabethan period broke several of the rules which ought to govern scientific observation'.[69] A similar view is repeated in the work of the other major commentator in this field, Frank Aydelotte, who establishes a three-part typology of rogue literature: that based on observation, the purely fictitious and, the largest category, that which was calmly plagiarised.

There can be little doubt that the genre of rogue literature has many elements, combining satire and parody with realism, comic tales with moral fable, and blending romance and excitement with a desire to expose and so destroy the vagabond way of life. In order to satisfy the demands of the market and their own literary impulses, these writers at best were guilty of embellishing the vagrant population with characteristics which stretched beyond factual truths. At worst, they were guilty of presenting a wholly distorted image, fed more by their imagination than any objective observation. It is not without reason that Sharpe comments that the literary image of the Elizabethan vagrant 'evaporates as soon as court records are examined'.[70]

However, irrespective of their accuracy or otherwise, the representations which were provided were of lasting significance, fixing a particular image of the rogue and vagabond in both the popular and official mind. It is unlikely to be mere coincidence that the literary descriptions of 'orders of knaues' preceded statutes which created the wide-ranging category of rogues and vagabonds.[71]

The inescapable conclusion to be drawn from this consideration of the main body of early modern sources on Gypsies is of their unreliability. There appear to be significant similarities between official and literary sources, with both showing a real concern over the vagabond menace and a desire to maintain order in the face of the itinerant and subversive underworld. Much of both official and literary writing was informed, guided and coloured by this originating perspective of 'problem'. Moreover, while there was undoubtedly a measure of truth in the representations given (after all, the reading public had to be able to recognise the subject of the pamphlets), it was also the case that these truths were then stretched into what was more like a caricature or satire on the vagabond population by creating a view of a colourful yet threatening netherworld. Although this has been described as an 'age where plagiarism was no sin', the wholesale plundering which took place serves to shrink an already limited source

base.[72] With these major qualifications in mind, it is now instructive to look in more detail at the accounts provided.

Contemporary representations of the Gypsy: 'difference'

The images of the Gypsy to be found in official and literary sources share many features in common, with a high degree of overlap in the language used and the descriptions provided. Initially the boundary around the group was fixed by virtue of their being strangers who had come into the realm. On this was built a range of other characteristics which stressed the differences from both the indigenous population generally and the native itinerant population in particular. From the various early modern accounts of Gypsies a comprehensive image of the group emerges, covering their origins, dress, behaviour, employments, morality, polity, language and physiognomy.

Their foreign origins were indicated in the statutes of 1530 and 1554, where reference was made to them coming into the realm and being 'outlandysshe people', meaning literally people from outside this land.[73] Their self-labelling as Egyptians was thought to have given a clue to their native identity, though Thomas Dekker, for one, was less than convinced: 'lf they be Egyptians, sure I am they never descended from the tribes of any of those people that came out of the land of Egypt' They were said to be physiologically distinct by virtue of their tawny complexion, and it was commented that they wore 'od and phantastique' clothes that were 'contrary to other nacions'.[74] The 'strangeness of the attyre of their heades' was remarked upon by many contemporaries.[75] They followed a nomadic way of life, going from 'Shire to Shire and place to place', [76] with the only known reference from this period to a settled Egyptian being that contained in *A Dyalogue of Syr Thomas More.*[77]

There is less agreement concerning the size of the travelling group. The statutes of 1530 and 1554 refer to them going about in 'greate Companies' and Samuel Rid, in his admittedly second-hand work, mentioned that they never travelled with less than 100 men and women.[78] Elsewhere it was indicated that there might be 300 or 400 in a county, but they travelled in groups of between two and six adults, with their children (who often rode in panniers on the horses).[79] However, although moving about in small numbers, they periodically came together, whether weekly in an alehouse or at a fair or market. They indicated their movements to each other by sticking up small boughs in various places, which was a practice much commented upon in later periods by the lorists.[80] Dekker, with typical literary flourish, says of their almost instinctive and intuitive ability to unite as a group: 'They have a trick, like water cut with a sword, to come together instantly and easily again.'[81]

Most comment was reserved for their means of making a living, about which a strong and negative consensus emerged. They were said to survive by using 'greate subtyll and craftye meanes to deceyve the people', mainly by fortune telling, palmistry, picking pockets and other felonies and robberies.[82] The only

slight corrective to this picture of 'deep, deceitful practises' is to be found in the work of Andrew Boorde, where he mentions that they also 'be pleasant dausers'.[83] In addition, they were accused of intimidating farmers and Justices of the Peace, staying in barns which became 'the bed of incests, whoredoms, adulteries and of all other black and deadly-damned impieties', and of being 'barbarous in condition, beastly in behaviour and bloody if they meet advantage'.[84] Taking the lead from Andrew Boorde, they were thought to have their own language, which differed from both the native English and also the cant used by the remainder of the vagrant and criminal underworld.[85]

In this way, through emphasis on foreign origins and distinctiveness in way of life and physical appearance, the separate identity of Gypsies from the indigenous population as a whole, and from the rest of the assorted indigenous nomadic population in particular, was established. The simple fact of their being labelled as Egyptians, and of having specific legislation directed against them, marked them out as a distinct group. As well as establishing 'difference', the images and representations of the Gypsies also tended to have been cast in a negative light. Invariably the Egyptians were linked with animal-like behaviour, violence, immorality, deception and parasitism. However, it should also be noted, perhaps paradoxically, that a more positive glimmer was occasionally to be found in descriptions which concentrated on the colour, vitality and exoticism of the group.

In many of its essentials the basis for the construction of a Gypsy identity rooted in foreignness and strangeness, and given popular and official sanction through statutes and rogue literature, had been laid. In later writings on the early modern period broadly, and on Gypsies in this period specifically, it is possible to see how this identity, both with and without the hostile or negative judgements, was repeated and reinforced.

The clearest example of this can be found in the studies of Gypsies emanating from the large school of Gypsy lorists.[86] Almost without exception their works were underpinned by a faith in the separate racial identity of the Gypsy. Drawing for their analytical guidance on nineteenth-century racial theory, the lorists traced this separateness of the English Gypsies from their original migrations and on to their experiences as immigrants in the sixteenth century. To a large extent the issues of intermixing and acculturation in this period have been overlooked in their writings, and the tendency has been to establish and maintain the Gypsies' isolation from the wider vagrant and nomadic population from this time onwards.

Henry Crofton, one of the most noted of the Gypsy lorists on the early modern period, took a particular interest in the apparent distinctiveness of the Gypsy costume, which immediately distanced them from the ordinary rogue and vagabond. He argued that when travelling through Europe in the fifteenth century the Gypsy costume was in no way remarkable and was mainly that of the ragged vagabond. But on arriving in England, and in order to give visual substance to their claims of Egyptian origin, the Gypsies dressed in distinctive

oriental dress, composed of turbans and toga-like cloaks. Even when reduced to wearing what could be begged, borrowed or stolen, they still, he claimed, showed a preference for the brightly coloured, the extravagant and the showy.[87]

A.V. Judges, author of *The Elizabethan Underworld* (1930), takes as the starting point for his remarks on early modern Gypsies the work of James Sampson and the nineteenth-century Gypsy lorists, providing a summary history of the 'race' before commenting more specifically on their position within the Elizabethan 'underworld'. Although he raises certain questions concerning the veracity and accuracy of the rogue literature on which he bases his study, he nevertheless accepts the accounts given of the Gypsies and their way of life. In an attempt to preserve their separateness he writes, purely speculatively, that the idea 'that the bands of Egyptians attracted to their ranks men and women of English race in any considerable numbers is to be doubted'.[88] Frank Aydelotte concurs with this view. Having suggested that some degree of intermixing did take place between Gypsies and English rogues, he then states that this does 'not prove that the relations were very intimate'.[89] Further on he writes, '[t]he gipsies are an exclusive people, not likely to admit outsiders into their fellowship, and probably did so in the sixteenth century only to a very limited extent'.[90] While he is correct to be cautious in suggesting that intermixing did not necessarily prove intimacy, his claims for exclusivity remain wholly unsubstantiated. In a later study by John Pound of poverty and vagrancy in Tudor England, we again come across anachronistic references to the 'Romany' and to 'race', with repeated images of dark-skinned strangers and of the mysterious, occult and fortune telling practices associated with the group.[91]

Similarly, in a work which explicitly intended to convey the colour and energy, sights and smells, noise and bustle of the Elizabethan underworld, Gamini Salgādo, in a chapter devoted exclusively to the Gypsies, or 'Minions of the Moon', suggests that 'these early immigrants survived well beyond our period as a cohesive group with a life style very little affected by the society around them'.[92] Salgādo argues this despite acknowledging intermixing and imitation, thereby firmly holding to a definition reliant on the continued separateness and cohesion of the 'Romany folk' over an extended historical period. He accepts that their appearance was spectacular and outlandish, that their faces were swarthy, and that they wore fantastic costumes of embroidered turbans, brightly coloured scarves and tinkling bells about their feet. In short, they were 'a special class of vagrants, at once exotic and familiar'.[93] In a passage which strongly echoes the imagined depictions of the early rogue writers, Salgādo constructs his own romanticised picture:

> With their many coloured scarves flying in the wind and the music of their bells lilting upon the summer air, these dancing Egyptians brought colour and theatricality to many an English village, creating a larger-than-life spectacle…. Perhaps in the mind of many country people a stolen fowl or sheep was not too high a price to pay for all the glamour and gaiety.[94]

While Gypsy entertainers were undoubtedly a part of the social life of the Elizabethan village, Salgādo adds his own extravagant tint of mystery and excitement, which derives more from imagination and speculation than known recorded sources. The suggested appeal of the Gypsy and the idea of cordial relations with the local population offer an interesting alternative to the perspective which stresses only the negative and the hostile; yet the argument remains unproved and, given the problems with sources, possibly unproveable.

This has been to focus on the origins and reproduction of the idea that Gypsies were separate and different. This, as mentioned previously, was not the only legacy from the early modern period. The response of the state, increasingly unconcerned with the niceties of differentiation, and the implications of the problems with the evidence for separateness provide the others.

'Difference': a critical commentary

Although the evidence is patchy, there can be little doubt that England witnessed the arrival at various times in the sixteenth century of a group or groups of immigrants, or 'outlandysshe people', called or calling themselves Egyptians. It seems likely that some left following the harsh statute of 1530, but, as indicated in the 1554 Act, these soon returned, perhaps fleeing more vigorous persecution elsewhere in Europe. Also, it is reasonable to expect this group to have been identifiable from the indigenous population, both settled and nomadic, according to the various criteria outlined previously. Even so, this picture of separateness needs some critical commentary. While a basis for distinctiveness exists, that base may not be quite as secure as it first appears. While the term 'Egyptian' indicates the existence of a group which in some way or ways was identifiable from all others, it is also true that the emergence of supplementary labels, such as 'counterfeit Egyptians', suggests that the picture concerning separateness was perhaps more indistinct than it at first might appear. The lack of clarity concerning who might be listed under this latter heading serves further to confuse matters. A main factor contributing to the growth of confusion occurred when the first-generation immigrants began to have children, meaning that the new offspring were outside the definition of Egyptian as contained in existing legislation by virtue of their not having come into the realm but instead being born into it. The fact of their English birth meant that they were entitled to certain rights under law which were not available to their 'stranger' parents. Similarly, references to 'rogues' and 'lewde vagabundes' were just as likely to be applied to Gypsies as non-Gypsies.[95] Second, it is important not to treat the images given of Gypsies in isolation from representations given of the wider nomadic and vagrant population. It becomes strikingly apparent that writing on these groups overlapped in style, tone and content. Third, and relating to both the previous, is the evidence, albeit often circumstantial, of intermixing between the two groups, raising critical doubt about the ability of the groups to maintain separate existences and the likelihood of their doing so. The key issues here

therefore concern the use and meanings of labels in the early modern period, the significant overlap in the constructed representations of Gypsies and the wider vagabond population, and the possibility of building an alternative picture which stresses the blurring rather than the distinctiveness of boundaries.

The picture of the group as separate and distinctive is reliant on both descriptions derived from sources of dubious merit and an uncritical acceptance that when an individual or group has been described as Gypsy or Egyptian the fixing of such a label is warranted and accurate. Not only does this underplay the many criticisms which can be levelled against official and literary texts, but it also ignores the real problems raised by outsiders affixing categorising labels in an often largely subjective, inconsistent and *ad hoc* manner. An example of one group being tagged 'vagabond' by one commentator and 'Gypsy' by another is provided by the large meetings said to have been held at the Devil's Arse in Derbyshire.[96] Information about Gypsies could thus be missed because of their being labelled vagabond, just as the information could be distorted as a result of a group of non-Gypsies being mistakenly labelled as Egyptian. In short, there is no guarantee that an individual described by an outsider as a Gypsy was in fact a member of that group. The difficulty, of course, is that there is no way of knowing the criteria being used by any commentator when applying particular labels to individuals or groups. Where one would see an Egyptian another might see a vagabond or even a counterfeit Egyptian.[97] A traveller or tinker to one observer would become a vagrant or a Gypsy to another. Such confusion or ambiguity in the use of labels only becomes a problem if the descriptions which then accompany them are taken at their face value. The work of Andrew Boorde, mentioned earlier, provides an interesting example of these problems and also of the ways in which his writing has been subsequently interpreted and used.

It has already been shown that Boorde is widely regarded as having compiled the first table of Gypsy words with English translations. The impression given is that the words were taken from the mouths of Egyptians, probably in an alehouse. On closer inspection this would seem to be a highly dubious assertion. The relevant section, entitled 'Chapter treteth of Egypt, and of theyr mony and of theyr speche', is taken from a book describing his travels throughout the world and is preceded by an account of his visit to Turkey and followed by his observations on Jews and Jewry. The chapter begins 'Egipt is a countrey ioyned to Iury'. It is possible that Boorde was referring to those people in England called or calling themselves Egyptians, as he does comment: '[t]her be few or none of the Egipcions that doth dwel in Egipt, for Egipt is repleted now with infydele alyons'.[98] It is also possible that he simply transposed his experience of Egyptians in England to the country of Egypt. However, the accuracy of the recorded speech and the people to whom it applied must remain as speculation.

Second, when considering the construction and representation of the group further observations can be made if we look wider than the Gypsies themselves. If we expand the scope of the analysis to incorporate representations of the wider vagrant and vagabond population, then certain parallels become apparent. A

boundary between this larger grouping and the rest of society was created by establishing differences in social and political organisation, culture, language and morality. The diverse peoples who made up the itinerant population were grouped in a community, set apart from mainstream society, and portrayed as inhabiting an alternative and threatening underworld. They were said to pursue an immoral and criminal lifestyle and to be organised in a fraternal company with hierarchical orders, thus mirroring the arrangements of dominant society, though below it in terms of respectability and acceptability.

The accounts given of the nomadic and vagabond population almost exactly match those given of the Egyptians. The two groups inhabited the same world, at once both exhilarating and fascinating but also threatening and poised to undermine and overthrow society. They both inhabited a netherworld far removed from the acceptable, respectable ways of majority society, earning their living wholly by deceit, crime and parasitism. In terms of their nomadic lifestyle, there was little to distinguish the Gypsies from the Irish, with both travelling the country in groups. Both the Egyptian and other vagabonds were accused of child-stealing and of choking animals and livestock for their own gain. In time, these activities came to be almost exclusively associated with the Gypsies, but in the early modern period no distinction was made between them. Fortune tellers were not only to be found in the Gypsy camps, and palmistry had for long been a staple means of earning an income by disparate rogues, vagabonds and travellers. Other similarities were to be found in the many deceitful practices carried out by both, such as selling love philtres, and offering to miraculously double money and then departing with the original sum in return for some worthless item. Both were also said to travel in relatively small groups but to come together at larger meetings at various times or points in the year and to have a language which separated them from the rest of the population, Romany and thieves' cant. The distinctions between these were imprecise and it was more usual to group together those thought to speak this language as part of the several tribes of the 'canting crew' than to attempt to separate both the peoples and the languages. *The English Rogue,* published in 1605, gives as Romany speech a vocabulary which was almost wholly that of English vagrants, as does the life of Bampfylde Moore Carew, published in the next century.[99] Moreover, differences in dress may not have been as marked as sometimes indicated if we accept descriptions which stress their beggarly and ragged nature.

In short, the attempt to construct a group that was different from settled, majority society, and that had its own hierarchies, codes, language, behaviour, morality, methods of making a living (usually by criminal and parasitical means) and forms of political organisation, applied equally to the Gypsies as to the wider vagrant and nomadic population as a whole. These groups, individually and severally, were perceived as a 'problem' and as 'outcasts' requiring a legislative remedy, and their constructed identity drew in every possible characteristic which might be used to distinguish them from respectable society.

Given the similarities, it is of little surprise that commentators, legislators and law enforcers did not concern themselves over issues of difference within this larger and troublesome population. Instead, the state sought to bring within the purview of the law all those who had not only come into the realm as Egyptians but also those who had transformed and disguised themselves as Gypsies, those who joined or travelled with them for a period of one month or more, and any other person adopting a masterless way of life and living on the fringes of vagrancy, vagabondage and criminality. One consequence of this tendency to group together all itinerants was a generalised demonisation of virtually the entire nomadic population.

The reason that the representations of Gypsies show considerable overlap with those of the wider vagrant and vagabond population is that the images are mostly taken from identical sources. Immediately, then, it is necessary to remember the reservations outlined earlier when considering these materials. In particular, the usual reliance is on the genre of rogue literature, described in A.L. Beier's major study of vagrancy as having a superficial taxonomy and being guilty of trivialisation.[100] Again, there is the problem of distinguishing fact from fiction in the main body of sources. Even so, their importance in constructing an image and response to these groups should not be underestimated and, as Beier has so correctly asserted, '[t]he rogue literature more than confirmed the learned theory of vagrancy, it elaborated and propagated it'.[101] Furthermore, this image was subsequently picked up by later commentators, who, by accepting the literary image at face value and neglecting alternative sources or a critical reading, then repeated the distorted stereotype of the colourful but threatening criminal underworld and low life.[102] The lasting appeal of the imagery is shown in the work of Gamini Salgādo:

> when every allowance has been made for contemporary habits of mind it is difficult to believe that the hierarchies of rogues and vagrants mentioned by Harman and others are merely figments of incensed imaginations. Rather they suggest a degree of professionalism and organisation in the ranks of the outsiders which may have been the minimum condition for survival.[103]

No reasons are offered for this acceptance of Harman and others, and Salgādo seems to put his faith in their analysis and common sense rather than factual evidence. In his collection of early modern rogue sources Salgādo confirms that he is offering a collection which 'portrays a society within a society, or rather outside it, an anti-society with its own rules and rulers'.[104] Salgādo thus seeks to continue the tradition and does not intend to challenge the accounts or to balance them against other sources. Historical accuracy tends to give way to an account, albeit colourful and engaging, of an underworld, or netherworld, where whores, nomads, cripples and thieves take part in all forms of trickery and lechery.

It is as a result of a similar repetition in the work of John Pound of these conventional early modern images that A.L. Beier begins his study of vagrants in Elizabethan England with the comment that Elizabethan assumptions about, and representations of, vagrants and vagrancy as criminally organised in gangs, as work shy and idle, and as a threat to the state, have rubbed off on later historians.[105] Of the portrayal to be found in the works of Pound, Salgādo and others, Beier has written:

> Although more colourful than administrative history, this perspective distorts reality by exclusive reliance upon literary sources; it makes little attempt to distinguish fact from fiction and neglects official records almost entirely.[106]

By drawing parallels with the representations of the wider vagabond population it is possible to see that the construction of the picture of this group was based on very similar criteria to that of the Gypsies. Second, it is also evident that the components of the picture show many overlaps in detail with that of the Egyptians, and that the picture is at best partial and at worst a misleading distortion.

It is from the representation of the vagrant and vagabond population that we can construct a three-part typology which, although somewhat crude, indicates the close association between type of source and nature of image. From rogue literature a picture is given of colour, excitement, energy, freedom and lack of restraint, mixed with an element of indignation, which was at least ambiguous in its protest against the brazen immorality of the group. From official records the emphasis is more on the threat and danger posed by the group to morality, health, law and order, the commonwealth and society. As indicated, a very different picture would emerge if court rather than literary records had been the main source. These serve to remove the colour, uniformity and any notion of fraternity among the vagrant community and instead lead to an image which focuses more on poverty and isolation. Instead of the separate netherworld of a disorderly and threatening community we are left with a picture of isolated, individualised desperation.[107] However, this particular approach was neither current nor popular at the time, and the image of the exciting and picaresque prevailed.

The final area to be considered as at least a partial corrective to the picture which stresses the separateness of the Egyptians concerns the issue of intermixing, acculturation and the blurring which occurred in the boundaries between groups. The nature and extent of intermixing between the Gypsy and the indigenous population is an issue which raises many questions of major significance concerning group identity. Did intermixing occur at all? How common or widespread was it? Did it involve intermarriage? How far did it threaten or dilute group identity? Clearly such questions are of much broader application to group formation and identity than merely to Gypsies in this period.

It is almost inconceivable that any minority group, whether defined according to origins, beliefs or behaviour, is able consistently and repeatedly to maintain over time an impervious and impenetrable barrier to all those defined as being outside the group. Indeed, in relation to the Gypsies, much of the discussion is not about whether intermixing took place, as many commentators seem to accept this, if reluctantly, but rather about its significance and effects.

The clearest indication of intermixing is provided in the Elizabethan statute against the Egyptians of 1562, which extended the scope of previous legislation to include persons found disguised in the company of vagabond Egyptians. This would apparently fit a previous pattern evident almost from the time of the Gypsies' first migrations of 'associating unto them some of every country where they wander'.[108] The question, then, is not so much whether intermixing occurred but rather what it meant in terms of group identity. It is here that the speculative and circumstantial nature of the evidence is open to interpretation. Symons' phrase 'associating unto them' suggests what is a common analysis of the process whereby the incomers were absorbed into the group rather than intermixing in any way threatening the original integrity of the group itself. However, while this analysis may have a basis in fact – and once again we are at the mercy of inconclusive sources – it is also the case that this allows those who seek to maintain the notion of separateness a convenient way of disregarding a major challenge to what is essentially a static view of group character. An alternative is to see intermixing as part of a process of mutual acculturation, with both sides adopting and incorporating the ways and practices of the other. This would allow for the entry of a group of foreign 'Egyptians' in the sixteenth century, but instead of this group maintaining their own separate identity, it permits greater fluidity between the original immigrants, their offspring and an indigenous nomadic population with whom they shared much in common.

It is apparent that our knowledge of Gypsies and the Gypsy way of life in the early modern period is reliant on a narrow source base provided entirely by outsiders to the group. As with any historical source, it is essential that the constraints of the genre of source and the subjectivity on the part of the author(s) is identified, whether they are the framers and writers of laws or hack journalists. It almost goes without saying that the perspective obtained from official records, notably persecutory statutes, is prone to an inevitable bias. Rogue literature, while not limited in the same way, is itself of questionable value owing largely to its second-hand and plagiarised nature. Even so, what has emerged from these sources are various and to some extent competing definitions and representations of the Gypsy. On the one hand, it is their alien, foreign status which is seen as paramount, providing the basis for a range of differences which separated them from the indigenous population. The label 'Egyptian' suggests difference, even if that difference was not always visible or precisely defined. On the other hand, a further definition also emerged which concentrated not on difference, but rather on the creation of a broadly defined vagabond group of disparate origins but with a shared way of life and culture in common. The tone of the definitions and

representations could be, at one and the same time, both negative and positive. While there was, in the age of the Elizabethans, much to condemn in and fear from the Gypsy and vagabond way of life, it also carried with it a mystery, romance, excitement and exoticism which many found compelling.

Subsequent writing on Gypsies in the early modern period made full use of this range of images contained in contemporary sources. In some instances the later accounts amount to little more than uncritical reproductions from the official and literary sources, and so repeat the representation of Gypsies as forming an alarming and exciting component of the much-vaunted Elizabethan underworld. Also, however, are to be found accounts which offer a different emphasis by not becoming involved in the obsession with separateness and where the line differentiating the Gypsy from others is seen as blurred, indistinct and confused.

The importance of this period is that it has provided the base on which later theories about Gypsy identity depend. In particular, the initial representation of Gypsies as a strange and separate people became the touchstone of the work and analyses of the later Gypsy lorists, but with India replacing Egypt as the place of origin. But just as early modern writing and thinking influenced subsequent accounts, so too did the later writers impose, mechanistically, later knowledge and opinion on the Elizabethan period. It is apparent that early sources on the Gypsies were often unembarrassed plagiarisms as well as the basis for subsequent plagiarism. In both cases, as will be seen, such habits often stretched the material, and the conclusions to be derived from it, beyond breaking point.

Notes

1 The colourful description of Gypsies as ‘land-pirates’ and ‘moon-men’ can be found in Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and Candle-light Or the Bell Mans second Nights walke. In which Hee brings to light, a Broode of more strange Villanies, than ever were till this yeare discovered* (London, 1608). I have not come across these terms in any other contemporary source. The meaning of the term ‘land-pirates’ is evident, though the ascription ‘moon-men’ is less so. Dekker said this was a term used in mockery to suggest madness, but then followed this with a further rationalisation: ‘Their name they borrow from the moon, because, as the moon is never in one shape two nights together, but wanders up and down Heaven like an antic, so these changeable-stuff-companions never tarry one day in a place.’ For a reprint of this publication, and for comment on Dekker’s life and writing, see A.V. Judges, *The Elizabethan Underworld: A Collection of Tudor and Early Stuart tracts and ballads telling of the lives and misdoings of vagabonds, thieves, rogues and cozeners, and giving some account of the operation of the criminal law* (London, 1930). See also D. Mayall, ‘Egyptians and vagabonds: representations of the Gypsy in early modern official and rogue literature’, *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 16, No. 3, November 1997, pp. 55–82, for an earlier version of this chapter.

2 It should be noted that the label and spelling 'Gypsy' was not commonly used until around the middle of the seventeenth century. Before this they were generally referred to as Egiptians, Jepsyes, Gepsyes, Geppsis, Jeppsis and Jeptses.

3 Henry Thomas Crofton, 'Early annals of the Gypsies in England', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* [hereafter *JGLS],* Old Series, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1888, pp. 5–25; Eric Otto Winstedt, 'Early British Gypsies', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1913–1914, pp. 5–37; Hubert Hall, 'Some potential sources for the early history of Gypsies in England', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 7, Nos. 3–4, 1928, pp. 163–168; 'Notes & Queries: 7. Addenda to Crofton's Early Annals', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1927, pp. 189–190.

4 Hall (1928), p. 165. Demographic trends, family size and patterns of mobility, for example, can to some extent be reconstructed from parish registers, assize records, Privy Council papers and Constables' accounts. Much important research is being done in this direction, notably by David Smith, a former editor of the *JGLS.*

5 C.J. Ribton-Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy and Beggars and Begging* (London, 1887), provides a comprehensive listing of all legislation governing and restricting vagrants and other nomads from AD 673 to 1882. For copies of the legislation, see *The Statutes of the Realm. Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third. In pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain. From Original Records and Authentic manuscripts,* Vol. 3 (London, 1818), Vol. 4 (London, 1819).

6 For reprints of Hext's address, see Frank Aydelotte, *Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds* (London, 1967; 1st edn, 1913), pp. 167–173. The original of this document is located in the British Library, MS Lansdowne, 81, Nos. 62 and 64.

7 See Alexander A. Parker, *Literature and the Delinquent: The Picaresque Novel in Spain and Europe 1599–1753* (Edinburgh, 1967); Robert Alter, *Rogue's Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964); Frank Wadleigh Chandler, *Romances of Roguery: An Episode in the History of the Novel: The Picaresque Novel in Spain* (New York, 1961; facsimile reprint of 1899 edn), notes that this genre was a European-wide phenomenon which flourished in the wake of the Renaissance (p. 1).

8 The latter of these primarily form the basis of the discussion of rogue literature in this chapter. However, it should be noted that Gypsies also appeared, or were briefly mentioned, in various plays by Shakespeare, in Thomas Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women,* c.1622, and in Ben Jonson's *Gypsies Metamorphosed,* which played before James I.

9 Christopher Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution 1530–1780* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 44.

10 Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island. Immigration and British Society 1871–1971* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 7.

11 C.W. Chitty, 'Aliens in England in the 16th century', *Race,* Vol. 8, No. 2, 1966, p. 30; Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here among Us: Policies, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London, 1996), p. 12. Also see pp. 4–6 for a very good review of literature on immigration to England in this period. See also Robin D. Gwynn, *Huguenot Heritage: The History and Contribution of the Huguenots in Britain* (London, 1985); Bernard Cottret, *The Huguenots in England: Immigration and Settlement, c.1550–1700* (Cambridge, 1991); Lien Bich Luu, '"Taking the bread out of our mouths": xenophobia in early

modern London', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 19, No. 2, 2000, pp. 1–22. It is apparent that the nature of and reasons for the antipathetic treatment of aliens and strangers echo the responses to the Egyptians.

12 Peter Fryer, *Staying Power. The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), p. 8.

13 Crofton, 'Early annals', pp. 5–25; Sir Thomas More, *A Dyalogue of Syr Thomas More* (London, 1529), book iii, chapter 15, quoted in E.O. Winstedt, 'The Norwood Gypsies and their vocabulary', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 9, Nos. 3–4, 1915–1916, pp. 129–152.

14 An Acte concernynge outlandysh People, callynge themselves Egyptians, 22 Henry VIII, c.10, 10, 1530.

15 An Act for the punishement of certayne Persons calling themselves Egyptians, 1 & 2 Philip & Mary, c.4, 1554.

16 For an introduction to the debates on the nature and extent of anti-alien sentiment, and a statement in support of English xenophobia, see Yungblut (1996), pp. 37ff. In contrast Bernard Cottret (1991, p. 2) argues that the Huguenots 'fared rather well' in England (1991), p. 2. See also Gwynn (1985).

17 The proclamation was not carried out.

18 W.E.A. Axon, 'Laws relating to Gypsies', in William Andrews (ed.), *Legal Lore: Curiosities of Law and Lawyers* (London, 1897), p. 168.

19 Luke Owen Pike, *A History of Crime in England, illustrating the Changes of the Laws in the progress of Civilisation, Written from the Public Records and other Contemporary Evidence, Vol. 2, From the Accession of Henry VII to the Present Time* (London, 1876), p. 76.

20 See J.F. Pound, 'Vagrants and the social order in Elizabethan England', *Past and Present,* No. 71, 1976, pp. 126–129, and A.L. Beier, 'A rejoinder', *Past and Present,* No. 71, 1976, pp. 130–134, for a discussion of the notion of bands of 'professional vagrants'.

21 A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men. The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560–1640* (London, 1985), chapter 3. See also A.L. Beier, 'Social problems in Elizabethan London', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 9, 1978–1979, pp. 203–221.

22 J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550–1750* (London, 1984), p. 100; see also Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988).

23 Sharpe (1984), p. 100. Slack (1988, pp. 43–4) gives figures of c.2.3 million for 1524 and c.5.3 million for 1656.

24 Beier (1985), p. xix. See also John Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1973); Joyce Youings, *Sixteenth-century England* (London, 1984), pp. 88–90.

25 Axon (1897), p. 171.

26 Beier (1978–1979), pp. 203–221. He notes that 'it is no coincidence that production of the literature of roguery appears to reach a peak in the 1590s and early 1600s', matching the peak in the growth of vagrancy (p. 220).

27 Beier (1985), p. xix.

28 C.S.L. Davies, 'Slavery and Protector Somerset: the Vagrancy Act of 1547', *Economic History Review,* Vol. xix, 1966, p. 539. D. Underdown writes that 'vagrancy and masterlessness were aspects of a wider problem of disorder in early modern England…the masterless challenged the fundamental social doctrine of the

period, that everyone belonged under the patriarchal authority of parent or master'. See D. Underdown, 'Review of A.L. Beier, *Masterlesss Men: the vagrancy problem in England 1560–1640', Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 18, No. 2, 1987, pp. 353–355. To the patriarchal authority of parent and master can also be added those of the church and the state.

29 See Leo Lucassen, 'Eternal vagrants? State formation, migration and travelling groups in Western-Europe, 1350–1914', paper for the workshop 'Migration and Settlement in a historical perspective', Wassenaar/NIAS, 23–24 September 1993. I am grateful to Leo Lucassen for providing me with a copy of his paper.

30 Slack (1988), pp. 24ff.

31 Paul Slack, 'Vagrants and vagrancy in England 1598–1664', in Peter Clark and David Souden (eds), *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), p. 49.

32 Sharpe (1984), p. 17.

33 Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1986), p. 158.

34 Beier (1985), pp. 104–105.

35 Beier (1976), p. 133.

36 Henry VIII c.9, 1511–1512. See Ribton-Turner (1887), pp. 675–697, for a full list of all legislation concerning rogues, vagrants and other wanderers. See also Youings (1984), pp. 281–283, for a summary of legislation between the 1530s and 1597.

37 See Ribton-Turner (1887), chapter 4, for full descriptions of the 'crafty' sciences.

38 An Acte concnyng punysshement of Beggers and Vacabunde, 22 Henry VIII, c.12, 1530–1531.

39 Eliz, c.iv, 1597–1598.

40 Beier (1985), p. 4. See also Frederick G. Blair, 'Forged passports of British Gypsies in the sixteenth century', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 29, 1950, pp. 131–137. Blair illustrates how sixteenth-century vagrancy laws were designed to restrain the mobility of all itinerant groups and persons, from wandering monks and sorcerers to Egyptians and valiant rogues. Blair also reproduces extracts from the Acts of the Privy Council chronicling the movement of a Gypsy band around England.

41 Vic Gatrell has written that the definition of crime 'often results from the process whereby dominant groups label as criminal whatever they find unacceptable'. For a fuller discussion of the process of criminalisation, see V.A.C. Gatrell, Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker, 'Introduction' to their edited volume *Crime and Law. The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500* (London, 1980).

42 It should be noted that licences were often and easily forged. See Blair, 'Forged passports', pp. 131–137.

43 For a most useful survey of the legislation and penalties directed against Gypsies and vagrants, see Pike (1876), Vol. 2.

44 Probably the best study of this remains E.M. Leonard, *The Early History of English Poor Relief (London,* 1961).

45 Slack (1988), p. 104.

46 An indication of the importance of this body of literature is provided by the major two-volume study by Frank Wadleigh Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery,* 2 volumes (1st edn, 1907; NewYork, 1958).

47 Andrew Borde, *The fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge. The whych dothe teache a man to speake parte of all manner of languages, and to know the usage and fashion of all maner of countreys. And for to know the moste parte of all maner of coynes and money, the whych is currant in every region. Made by Andrew Borde, of Physycke Doctor. Dedycated to the right Honourable & gracious lady Mary doughter of our souerayne Lorde king Henry the eyght,* imprinted in London by William Copland [1547?]. For a reprint, see F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge made by Andrew Borde of Physycke Doctor. A Compendyous Regyment or a Dyetary of helth made in Mountpyllier, compyled by Andrew Boorde of Physycke Doctour. Barnes in the Defence of the berde: a Treatyse made, answerynge the Treatyse of Doctor Borde upon Berdes,* edited, with a life of Andrew Boorde, and large extracts from his *Breuyary,* by F.J. Furnivall (London, 1870).

48 H.T. Crofton, 'Borde's Egipt speche', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1907, p. 164.

49 [Awdeley, John], *The Fraternity of Vagabonds. As well of ruffling vagabonds as of beggarly, of women as of men, of girls as of boys, with their proper names and qualities. With a description of the craft company of Cozeners and Shifters. Whereunto is also adjoined the Twenty-Five Orders of Knaves, otherwise called a Quartern of Knaves. Confirmed for ever by Cock Lorel* (1561; other edn, 1575); Arthur F. Kinney, *Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars: A new gallery of Tudor and early Stuart rogue literature exposing the lives, times, and cozening tricks of the Elizabethan underworld,* edited, with notes, from quartos of the first editions (Amherst, 1990), pp. 87–101.

50 Thomas Harman, *A Caueat or Warening for Commen Cursetors vulgarely called Vagabones, set forth by Thomas Harman Esquiere, for the utilite and profyyt of his naturall Cuntrey, Augmented and inlarged by the fyrst author here* of, printed by Wylliam Gryffith (London, 1567; 1st edn, 1566). See also Thomas Harman, *The fraternitye of vacabondes, by J. Awdeley. A caueat or warening for commen cursetors vulgarely called vagabones, by T. Harman. A sermon in praise of thieves and thievery by parson Haben or Haberdyne. Those parts of The groundworke of conny-catching, that differ from Harman's caueat,* edited by E. Viles and F.J. Furnival (London, 1869); Thomas Harman, *The rogues and vagabonds of Shakspere's youth [originally published as The Fraternitye of vacabondes by J. Awdeley],* edited by E. Viles (London, 1880); Thomas Harman, *The rogues and vagabonds of Shakespeare's youth: Awdeley's Fraternitye of vacabondes, and Harman's Caveat,* edited with an introduction by E. Viles and F.J. Furnivall (London, 1907). Arthur F. Kinney states that

> John Awdeley is important as the first author of a work on vagabonds in the Tudor period. His book was of great help to Thomas Harman, the best chronicler of vagabonds in England, who in his own text refers twice to this 'little brief' and who uses Awdeley's dictionary of terms to provide his own glossary on the underworld.
>
> (Kinney, 1990, p. 88) See also pp. 105–153.

51 *Liber Vagatorum. Der Betler Orden* (Nuremberg, 1510?; other edn, Spires, 1520?). Also published as *The Book of vagabonds and Beggars: with a vocabulary of their language (Liber Vagatorum). Edited by Martin Luther [and by him entitled 'Von der falschen Bettler Buberei'] …now first translated into English, with introduction and notes, by John Camden Hotten* (London, 1860); *The Book of Vagabonds and Beggars with a Vocabulary of their Language and a preface by Martin Luther, first translated into English by J.C. Hotten and now edited anew by D.B. Thomas* (London, 1932). Thomas notes that the book went through eighteen editions between 1510 and 1528. It should be noted that the growth of rogue literature, and the charges of plagiarism which accompanied this, also occurred throughout Europe. See Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London, 1997). Willems bases his argument on Reimer Gronemeyer's guide to writings on gypsies and vagabonds from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. See *Zigeuner im Spiegel früher Chroniken und Abhandlungen Quetten vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Giessen, 1987).

52 Aydelotte (1967), p. 117.

53 Chandler (1907), Vol. 1, writes, 'There can be no doubt that Awdeley and Harman were influenced by the German "Liber Vagatorum"', p. 92. He also talks more broadly of foreign influences (p. 35). A similar point is made by D.B. Thomas in *The Book of Vagabonds and Beggars,* pp. 37ff.

54 Aydelotte (1967), p. 119.

55 Judges (1930), p. 494; see also Thomas, *The Book of Vagabonds and Beggars,* p. 37.

56 See Thomas Dekker (1608); Thomas Dekker, *Bell-Man of London: A Discovery of all the Idle Vagabonds in England: their conditions: their laws amongst themselves: their degrees and orders: their meetings, and their manners of living, (both men and women)* (London, 1688); Robert Green's Conny-Catching series: *A Notable discovery of cozenage* (1591), *The Second Part of Cony-Catching* (1591), *A Disputation between a he-Cony-Catcher and a she-Cony-Catcher* (1592), and *The Black Book's Messenger* (1592); Richard Head, *The English Rogue described in the life of Meriton Latroon* (London, 1666).

57 All quotations are from Judges (1930), p. 495. The influence of Harman could, for example, be found most clearly in William Harrison's descriptions of 'several disorders' of rogues and vagabonds and their canting language. See William Harrison, *The Description of England,* originally published 1587, edited by Georges Edelen (New York, 1968). Reprint versions appear in Vol. 1 of the 1807–1808 reprint of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland.* Also see F.J. Furnivall (ed.), *The New Shakspere Society, Harrison's Description of England in Shakspere's Youth,* 4 Parts (London, 1877–1908).

58 Chandler (1907), Vol. 1, p. 90.

59 Slack (1988), p. 25.

60 Gamini Salgādo, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (Gloucester, 1984), p. 20.

61 Aydelotte (1967), p. 126.

62 Although he was a prolific writer very little is known of Dekker's life. Biographers have been unable to date his birth or death or to uncover any details of his parents or education. Any biographical information appears to have been extracted from his writings, mostly as supposition. See Mary Leland Hunt, *Thomas Dekker: A Study* (New York, 1911). See also A.H. Bullen's entry for Dekker in the *Dictionary*

of National Biography; A.F. Allison, *Thomas Dekker cl572–1632: A Bibliographical Catalogue of the Early Editions, to the end of the 17th century* (Folkestone and London, 1972); Ernest Rhys (ed.), *Thomas Dekker* (London, 1887); Alexander B. Grosart (ed.), *The Non-Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker. In Four Volumes. For the first time collected and edited, with memorial-introduction, notes and illustrations, etc.,* printed for private circulation only by the Huth Library (1885).

63 Chandler (1907), Vol. 1, p. 107; Judges (1930), p. 511.

64 Aydelotte (1967), p. 133.

65 Hunt (1911), pp. 135–136.

66 Judges also writes of the 'unblushing plagiarism of Harman' (1930, p. 511).

67 Reginald Scot, *The Discouerie of Witchcraft, wherein the lewde dealing of witches and witch-mongers is notablie detected* (London, 1584). The influence of Harman can also be seen in William Harrison's *Description of England,* published as a preface to the 1586 edition of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland.* Charges of plagiarism can also be levelled against the producers of the few woodcut images of Gypsies that have survived from the early modern period.

68 John Richetti, *Popular Fiction before Richardson. Narrative Patterns 1700–1739* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 23–24.

69 Judges (1930), p. xiii. Paul Slack (1987, p. 69) suggests that the works of those writers who followed and plagiarised Harman were 'the result of contemporary desires to define and perhaps to romanticise the vagrant phenomenon, to provide stereotypes in order to make the reality more explicable and more palatable'.

70 Sharpe (1984), p. 101.

71 Thomas, *The Book of Vagabonds and Beggars,* p. 47.

72 *Ibid.,* p. 37. See also Kinney (1990), pp. 55–56.

73 An Acte concyng Egypsyans, 22 Henry VIII, c.10, 1530–1531; An Acte for the punishement of certayne Persons calling themselves Egiptians, 1 & 2 Philip & Mary, c.iv, 1554–1555; An Acte for the Punishement of Vagabondes callyng themselfes Egiptians, 5 Eliz, c.20, 1562–1563.

74 Dekker, in Judges (1930), pp. 312–365. See also Borde [1547?]; Crofton, 'Borde's Egipt speeche', pp. 156–168.

75 R[id?], S[amuel], *Martin Mark-all, beadle of Bridewell; his defence and answere to [T. Dekker's] the Belman of London, Discivering the long-concealed Original and Regimen of Rogues, when they first began to take head, and how they have succeeded one the other suvccessively un to the six-and-twentieth year of King Henry the Eighth, gathered out of the Chronicle of Crackropes, and (as they term it) the Legend of Lorel* (London, 1610); reprinted in Judges (1930), pp. 383–422; J. Awdeley, *The fraternitye of vacabondes, by J. Awdeley, A caueat or warening for commen cursetors vulgarely called vagabones, by T. Harman. A sermon in praise of thieves and thievery by parson Haben or Haberdyne. Those parts of The groundworke of conny-catching, that differ from Harman's caueat,* edited by E. Viles and F.J. Furnivall (London, 1869). For reprints of *Fraternitye,* see Judges (1930), pp. 51–60, and Gamini Salgādo, *Cony-Catchers and bawdy baskets. An Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 59–78. For reprints of *Caueat,* see Judges (1930), pp. 61–118.. For reprints of *Martin Mark-all,* see Judges (1930), pp. 383–422.

76 An Acte concyng Egypsyans, 22 Henry VIII, c.10, 1530–1531.
77 Sir Thomas More, *A Dyalogue of Syr Thomas More.* See note 13.
78 S. Rid, *The Art of Iugling or Legerdemaine. Wherein is deciphered, all the conneyances of legerdemaine and Iugling, how they are effected, & wherein thet chiefly consist. Cautions to beware of cheating at cardes and Dice. The Detectuion of the beggerly Art of Alcumistry, &, the Foppery of foolish cousoning Charmes. All tending to mirth and recreation, especially for those that desire to have the insight and private practise thereof, Printed at London for T.B.* (1612); facsimile reprint: *The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books* (Norwood, New Jersey, 1974). See also Kinney (1990), pp. 263–291.
79 Edward Hext, Justice of the Peace in Somerset, to Burghley on the Increase of Rogues and Vagabonds, 25 September 1596. See also Dekker, in Judges (1930), p. 345.
80 This system of communication by symbols was given a criminal dimension in a recent internal Kent police memorandum. This 1990 document identified signs, now written in marker pens, which Gypsies allegedly left for each other in order to identify potential targets for burglary and house crimes. See the *Sunday Correspondent,* 12 August 1990.
81 Dekker, in Judges (1930), p. 345.
82 An Acte concyng Egypsyans, 22 Henry VIII, c.10, 1530–1531.
83 Boorde, in Crofton, 'Borde's Egipt speeche', p. 163.
84 Dekker, in Judges (1930), p. 344.
85 Boorde [1547?], reprinted in Crofton, 'Borde's Egipt speeche', pp. 163–164.
86 The Gypsy lorists will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.
87 H.T. Crofton, 'The former costume of the Gypsies', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1909, pp. 207–231.
88 Judges (1930), p. xxv.
89 Aydelotte (1967), p. 18.
90 *Ibid.,* p. 20
91 John Pound, *Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England* (London, 1971), p. 29.
92 Salgādo (1984), p. 151.
93 *Ibid.,* p. 151.
94 *Ibid.,* p. 157.
95 See Blair (1950), pp. 131–137. Blair notes the description of Gypsies as rogues and lewde vagabundes in *The Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1542–1642, N.S., 1–32,* edited by J.R. Dasent (London, 1890–1907).
96 See Beier (1985), p. 59; Rid (1610); Salgādo (1984).
97 The category of 'counterfeit Egyptian' first appeared in the Elizabethan statute against the Gypsies in 1562. The term 'counterfeit Egyptian' is itself ambiguous and subject to different interpretations.
98 Extract from Boorde, in H.T. Crofton, 'Borde's Egipt speeche', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1907, p. 163.
99 Salgādo (1984), p. 157. *The Life and Adventures of Bampfylde Moore Carew, commonly called the King of the Beggars* continues the tradition of picaresque novels. It tells the tale of adventures among the Gypsies in Britain, Ireland, Europe and America. Its popularity is indicated by the fact that there were at least thirty-one editions between 1745 and 1871 as well as a shorter version sold by hawkers.

See C.G. Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling. Illustrated by Incantations, specimens of medical magic, anecdotes, tales* (New York, 1962), p. x.

100 Beier (1985), p. 144.

101 *Ibid.,* p. 8.

102 *Ibid.,* p. xxi.

103 Salgādo (1972), p. 15.

104 Ibid., p. 23.

105 See John Pound, 'Vagrants and the social order in Elizabethan England', and A.L. Beier (1976), pp. 126–134.

106 Beier (1985), p. xxi.

107 See Beier (1985), especially chapter 8. Elsewhere Beier questions the validity and accuracy of the literary depictions of vagrants which focus on their separate culture and language: 'Apart from the writings of Robert Greene and Thomas Dekker, evidence is lacking to show that London vagrants had a "culture" of their own. No evidence has been found of the canting language that vagrants were supposed to use.' See Beier (1978–1979), p. 220. See also Peter Clark, 'The migrant in Kentish Towns 1580–1640', in Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700: Essays in Urban History* (London, 1972), p. 144.

108 Arthur Symons, 'Sir Thomas Brown on the Gypsies', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1911–1912, pp. 109–113. This article examines Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epedemica; or, Enquiries into very many received tenents, and commonly presumed truths,* 1646. Intermixing is mentioned on p. 113.

4
Race
The evolution of an idea

By the nineteenth century a large and important body of works was produced on Gypsies which was to influence enormously all subsequent writing on the group. Although covering many different authors and types of works, the shared image given of the group was that which presented them as a separate and distinct race.

The term 'race' was used repeatedly to describe the Gypsies and, across the range of nineteenth-century sources, it would have been exceptional to find them described in any other way. Scoto-Montanus, in an article in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* in 1828, spoke of them as 'a numerous race of people, indeed a whole nation'. In the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1832 they were 'a swarthy race', and their labelling as 'a race of wanderers',[1] 'a vagabond and useless race',[2] and a 'strange and alien race'[3] offers just a small flavour of both sources and descriptions. Vernon Morwood, a mid-century writer on Gypsies, sets up a wintry picture of clouds, barrenness and dilapidation before identifying the Gypsies as

> a race of men who, although dwelling amongst us, differ widely from ourselves in their origin and general habits…with but few exceptions those who claim kindred with the pure remnants of the gipsy people may be easily known by certain physical peculiarities which that race everywhere presents.[4]

In a few sentences Morwood manages to convey what he perceives to be the more important distinguishing characteristics of the people: the distance from 'us', ideas of (racial) purity, physical differences and an identity which is shared with all Gypsies elsewhere. In particular he seems concerned with establishing the nature and extent of the physical differences between 'them' and 'us':

> Generally speaking the men are of middle stature, well made and muscular, remarkably upright and full-chested, while walking their step is firm and quick. Some of the women in youth have very handsome features. Their hair, flowing in glossy tresses over their tawny but well-formed shoulders, their noses of Grecian type, their small, dark and piercing eyes, their confident mode of address, and ready command of language, with other

> characteristics furnish corroborative evidence that they are as distinct a people as the Jews.[5]

Morwood appears both intimidated by their presence and confidence and yet also curiously attracted, notwithstanding the fact that their lives were 'shrouded in moral darkness' and that they were living 'without a knowledge of God'. The comparison with that other singular and separate people, the Jews, is one that was to recur frequently.

The image provided here, and the language used, is to be found in a wide variety of texts. Inevitably the emphasis is not always that presented by Morwood, and his concerns for the Gypsies' spiritual welfare were not always shared, but ideas of separateness, difference and permanency of features remained ever present.

Even when the term 'race' was not explicitly used the same ideas about the people were conveyed in other ways. When we read about the Romany, pure blood, black blood, the Romanichal and the true Gypsy we are being told that it is possible to identify a race distinct not only from the majority and sedentary society, but also from the half-breeds, impostors and others who in pursuing an itinerant life may be like the real Gypsy but are nevertheless not of that race. The importance of blood ties and notions of inherited characteristics are central to the argument. It is not possible to become a Gypsy or acquire those defining features: according to this line of thought, you are either born a Gypsy, with all the physical and behavioural aspects determined at birth, or you are not.

As mentioned, these ideas, the language and the labelling appeared in a great number of texts, starting with Heinrich Grellmann in the late eighteenth century, flourishing in the nineteenth century, and with many examples which can also be drawn from the twentieth century and contemporary society. Moreover, this imagery extends beyond the written word and can be found in paintings, music, film and other forms of cultural discourse. The racial image of the Gypsy is persistent because of its diffusion.

By the mid- to late nineteenth century it was widely believed that the peoples of the world could be neatly and conveniently parcelled into separate and discrete races. In order to fully understand the definition of the Gypsy as one of the world's races it is necessary to locate the construction of this particular definition, by lorists, artists, writers and many others, in the broader context of nineteenth-century race thinking and the evolution of racial typology.

The idea of race[6]

Although the term race was first used in a poem by William Dunbar in 1508,[7] and continued to be used throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the initial meaning was loose and ambiguous and referred primarily to a class or group of people or things.[8] Hannaford has shown that the term first related to running, mathematical or astrological lines, millstreams, ships' wakes, marks and

courses.[9] It was later used to refer to a common descent or lineage, usually denoting good, noble or pure ancestry,[10] and it was not until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that it matured into an elaborate system of arranging and classifying the peoples of the world according to notions of permanent, biological, physical type.[11] The origins of the race concept were West European, emerging from countries which were developing, expanding and industrialising. The greater contact with other, less developed peoples, and a growing awareness of difference by explorers, travellers, missionaries, traders, scientists, doctors and the like, led to a genuine attempt to understand the basis, nature and significance of difference. That this became distorted into a hierarchical system of white superiority stemmed as much from a general and largely unconscious Victorian self-image and the seeping influence and status of science as it did from any conscious and deliberate attempt to justify imperialist exploitation.

Defining race

First encounters with the concept of 'race' and race thinking are like finding yourself in an elaborate and confusing maze. At every turn you come up against inconsistencies in the writings of particular racial theorists and subtle variations in points of detail between one writer and another even though they appear to be sharing a broadly similar perspective. The maze then further twists and turns in unexpected directions when you also take account of changes in meaning over time, shifts in the popularity of specific components of the concept, and the way that science could abandon or relegate a particular component only for it to be picked up and developed in more popular, and populist, modes of expression.

As noted by Michael Banton, a sociologist and one of the major writers on the history and meaning of race and racism, there is little in the way of an agreed consensus about its origins or meaning, and he adds that the race concept 'has appeared in diverse forms and has changed in character'.[12] There is no clear or decisive moment when the concept, and not merely the word, first appeared. It is used in a multitude of ways by different commentators and, in particular, hardly any two racial theorists from the nineteenth century share exactly a common usage.[13] There were important disagreements over the number of races, the order of ranking, the degree of difference separating one race from another, the range of innate abilities belonging to particular races and the degree of permanence of the differences.[14] Banton takes the idea of the different understandings of the concept a stage further when he contrasts the popular (folk) sense of the term with the more precise technical (analytical) meaning.[15] To add to the difficulties, the race concept has changed over time, it can be divided into various schools of thought,[16] and there are conceptual overlaps with other forms of classification, most notably with ethnicity but also with nation and class.[17] At the beginning of the twentieth century, 'race' was used to refer to any geographical, religious, class-based or colour-based grouping.[18] Moreover, it has managed to retain its

currency even when it has been scientifically, intellectually and morally debunked, indicating its powerful hold on the public if not the academic or scientific mind. The problems are usefully summarised in one of the classic works on race and racism:

> In all modern science there is no field where authorities differ more than in the classification of human races. Some have separated races on the basis of geographical distribution, some on the basis of skin colour, some on the basis of cephalic index, some on a combination of several traits. Some have divided mankind into three races, some into seventeen, some into thirty-four.[19]

Given the problems and confusion that surround the concept, it might seem that any attempt to discover a definition which would satisfy everyone is either a futile task or an exercise which would simply reduce the concept to a meaningless generalisation. However, if we abandon the ambition of discovering a single, all-encompassing definition, then a more realistic alternative appears: to identify the components, used in varying combinations, which serve to make up racial classification, all the while bearing in mind that diversity in racial thinking is always in evidence.

First, the most visible and obvious sign of human difference lies in the range of physical variation to be found among humans. While this has been recognised and commented upon from Greco-Roman times to the present, it was only from the late eighteenth century that phenotypical difference was elevated to primary position in the classification of peoples and became the keystone of racial typology.

Physical differences accommodated those that were immediately visible (such as skin colour, hair form and colour, eye form and colour, head form, nose shape) and those that were not (brain shape and cranial capacity, bone size). Anthropologists and anatomists differed over which of these were the most significant in differentiating between peoples, but each shared a common aim of establishing measurable criteria for racial difference. The statistical measurements and comparisons gave to the concept of race an objective and rational base.

Once group boundaries had been fixed by reference to particular visible physical characteristics, and once these had been subsequently extended to incorporate physiological features other than simply skin colour, it was a short and almost inevitable step to move beyond mere biological variation. Progressively, racial groups came to be defined and described according to social, cultural, psychological and behavioural differences, which were as clear and distinctive in their variation from one group to another as any visible physical difference.

This development and refinement of the racial typology had begun in the eighteenth century, when physical differences were extended beyond outward

characteristics to incorporate other bodily and constitutional features which were then seen as the explanation for the susceptibility to or protection from certain diseases.[20] Physical differences were thus being given significance as they served to explain other characteristics of a people. These ideas were then adopted and promoted by medical men with direct experience of the colonies, such as army surgeons and naval doctors. Causal links were established between the primary determinant of physical dissimilarities and, for example, culture, intelligence, behaviour, aptitude, attitude, health, psychology, moral qualities and sexuality.[21] In short, the physical characteristics of a race determined each of this range of other social, psychological and cultural capacities: biological determinism at its most explicit.[22] It has been argued elsewhere that this association of category of person with a predetermined type of behaviour is 'at the core of racial thinking'.[23] Central was the notion that each of these other variables could be traced back to such physical differences as size of brain, and bodily and bone structure. This method and analysis are to be found in the phrenological work of the Austrian anatomist Franz Joseph Gall and the Swedish scientist Anders (Andreas) Retzius:

> The practice of associating intellectual and cultural superiority with physical characteristics reached its most dramatic development in the science of phrenology, the study of the conformation of the skull as an indicator of mental ability and character.[24]

The correlation between mental ability and head shape is said to have laid the basis for future racial science by establishing the link between external appearance and innate ability.

Ideas of racial difference could be used to explain why some peoples were more advanced and civilised than others, and why some nations were higher in the natural order. The notion that levels of cultural development had their origins in physiological variation was commonplace in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the attempt to establish the connection between the two was, according to Banton, 'a reasonable if highly speculative hypothesis'.[25] It is possible to extend this argument beyond merely cultural difference. This racial line of reasoning which likewise sought to establish causal linkages between physical differences and mental abilities and levels of morality would have seemed perfectly legitimate and feasible at the time. In the desire to understand the different levels of development between peoples, race offered one possible solution. At best, it provided a convincing and irrefutable means of understanding the world. The explanatory power of emergent racial theory appeared as rational and logical, and in the search for the cause of differential development it was certainly as good as any other at the time. As Banton and Harwood have noted, 'There was no reason in principle for rejecting the proposition that race determined culture. It could have been true.'[26]

The connection between physical and other differences and their ranking on a superior/inferior scale form the third key component of the race concept. Having identified the nature and extent of difference – not only physical but the range of other attributes also – the scientists and other commentators on racial types subjectively judged and graded these characteristics into a hierarchy of merit, establishing contrasting dualisms of acceptable/unacceptable, superior/ inferior, developed/undeveloped, mature/immature and higher/lower. The ostensibly objective measurements which provided the core of race thinking were supplemented by value-laden and subjective assessments as to what constituted beauty, achievement, development and, indeed, culture. Racial theorists and scientists, no more nor less than any who went before or were to come after, were unable to escape from what has been seen as the human question that 'lies closest to the heart of man', that of superiority and inferiority,[27] and the dividing and ranking of groups into racial hierarchies was a way of negatively measuring 'others' against an idealised and romanticised picture of self.

This hierarchical ranking of peoples had its intellectual origins in the notion of a God-created Natural order. The religious-based ranking of animal, vegetable and mineral objects into a Great Chain of Being was, with racial typology, being applied more specifically to mankind.[28] An established belief in distinctions, order, inequality and hierarchy relating to the plant and animal kingdom became extended to cover the peoples of the world. The ranking order on a linear scale of primitive to complex was based on the subjective assessment of the state of the economic, political, moral and spiritual advance of some people and the backwardness of others.[29] Shadings occurred between the different varieties but a hierarchy was nevertheless evident, with Europeans in general, and Aryans in particular, placed firmly on the top. The racial category developed in such a way that physical, mental and cultural differences became interlocked, permitting the construction of ranking tables which were as fixed and permanent as the characteristics of the people themselves. Indeed, Nancy Stepan, in her study of the idea of race in science remarks that the notion that humans could be naturally ordered into a hierarchy served as the cornerstone of racial biology by the mid-nineteenth century.[30]

The final component of the race concept is provided by the notion of fixity of type. For some commentators this idea is absolutely central to racial theory. The range of differences that comprise a racial group were seen as innate and permanent, established by heredity and transmitted 'through the blood'. An individual could no more change the colour of his or her skin than they could increase the size and ability of their brain. Also, just as physical features were determined by heredity, so too were behavioural and psychological characteristics and, extending the sequence, the social and cultural. In short, each of the range of features that made up a particular racial group was locked in a permanent and unbroken chain. Wherever, and whenever, a particular group was to be found, the same links in the chain would be found and so also the same general physical type and character of the people. This, then, is to identify the

'pure' racial type, immutable and unchanging, standing outside time, and persisting as originally created.

The self-appointed task of the nineteenth-century racial theorists and scientists was to identify the original types and reveal their 'essence'. Any deviation from the pure type was seen as the product of intermixing and miscegenation, creating groups variously referred to in such pejorative terms as half-breeds, half-castes, mulattos and mongrels. The language used, and the obsession with purity and the perils of interbreeding, was the by-product of an age where concerns of national and racial identity were paramount.

The usually expressed idea is that from the late eighteenth century race came to mean each of the above notions. From this time, '"race" increasingly came to refer to a biological type of human being, and science purported to demonstrate not only the number and characteristics of each "race", but also a hierarchical relationship between them'.[31] What race thinking achieved was the elevation of phenotype to primary position in discourses of the 'other'. Primacy was given to a biological/heredity explanation of fixity of type and the separation of people into hierarchically arranged races, with their cultural, behavioural and mental features understood as traits that were transmitted biologically. Phenotypical variation was therefore accorded a central and defining role above differences in, say, religion, country of origin, culture or learnt behaviour.

Differences in race thinking

To identify components is not, though, to say that each of these can be found represented in every version of racial typology. Part of the complexity of the concept lies precisely in the variations that can be found from one racial typologist to the next, and, as Ruth Benedict has commented in her classic 1942 account of race and racism, '[i]n all modern science there is no field where authorities differ more than in the classification of human races'.[32] Perhaps the only consistent element is that each 'authority' will contain some comment on physiognomy, other non-physical features, the issue of hierarchy and notions of permanence or changeability. However, the nature of those comments and the balance between, and combination of, components, will vary from one to the next. Ideas of permanence could be present without notions of superiority or inferiority Similarly, ideas of hierarchy were perfectly compatible with notions of the changeability of racial types.[33] Also, there were marked disagreements over the number of 'pure' types, the geographical distribution of the races, the significance of physical differences, and whether these had biblical, climatic, environmental or hereditary causes.

The various explanations of physical difference developed into one of the more controversial and heated areas of debate between the racial theorists as they necessarily influenced views on the capacity of races to change and develop, and also on the nature and extent of the differences separating one group from

another.[34] Many of these issues can be seen in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century debate between the monogenists and the polygenists.[35]

At its most basic, monogenism promoted a belief in the single origin of all mankind, and was thus an essentially egalitarian and humanist system of beliefs holding to a Christian faith in the unity and brotherhood of all mankind. The monogenists were, though, divided among themselves over the explanation for the range of physical and other differences. One theory, held by a grouping known as the Adamites, accepted the biblical story of creation, seeing all men as descended from Adam and Eve, with differences in skin colour caused by God placing a curse on Ham or upon his son, Canaan, condemning one people to have black skin.[36] An alternative strand of monogenism believed that differences were the product of the impact of climate and the environment, giving rise to semi-permanent variations among mankind, and with each suited to their particular regions. This grouping, referred to as the rational monogenists, included a number of individuals who were later to occupy prominent positions in the development of racial science, such as Linnaeus, Buffon, Cuvier, Blumenbach and Prichard.

Polygenists, in contrast, held the view that the different races of man had separate origins, that this heterogeneity was permanent and that inequality and hierarchy were expressed in the different levels of civilisation achieved.[37] Races were therefore distinct biological types and, in contrast to the monogenists, were not seen simply as varieties of one species. The polygenists, who emerged out of a questioning of the Bible's traditional authority, were also a diverse grouping, encompassing neo-traditionalists, mosaic cosmologists and Lamarckians.[38] They explained the different varieties of mankind as the result of separate thoughts of God.[39] Although it is possible to see different opinions on the creation of man, on the origins of the separate races, and on the role of divine intervention as against the influence of the environment, both sides of the monogenist/polygenist divide had adherents to a belief in the superiority of some peoples and the inferiority of others. In his 1971 study of scientific attitudes to racial inferiority between 1859 and 1900, Haller states:

> In America as in Europe concepts of race inferiority existed in both monogenist and polygenist schools…. Almost the whole of scientific thought in both America and Europe in the decades before Darwin accepted race inferiority irrespective of whether the races sprang from a single original pair or were created separately.[40]

However, where the monogenists and polygenists did differ was over the issue of the permanence of type. For Malik ideas which denied fixity and allowed change were not compatible with his definition of race thinking. Explanations of difference based on ideas of divine intervention or heredity have a clear association with theories of the fixity of type and so fit comfortably within his analysis. The relationship with environmentalist theories is rather more

problematic, partly as the arguments themselves contain more than one perspective on the permanence of type. In one form the differences between humans, shaped by the climate and other environmental conditions, can be more or less permanent as they have evolved over centuries and been transmitted from one generation to the next. This, then, is a version of permanence which allows for slow and evolutionary change. The more crude variant expects change to be more immediate, revealing the capacity of man to alter to suit conditions. Each of these versions is a variant of racial thinking which retains a belief in the primacy of physical difference and upholds relations of superiority and inferiority between the various types.

When tracing the variation in, and evolution of, thinking on issues of human difference it is widely accepted that the biblical gave way to the environmental explanation, which then dominated up to the end of the eighteenth century, when both increasingly came to be replaced by the racial/heredity argument.

This shift in emphasis is seen primarily as the result of the growth of secularisation and the influence of scientific enquiry and methods. These notions of replacement, shift and transformation in race thinking, while indicating the constantly changing tides in opinions about the origins and nature of difference, can also underplay the continuity, well into the nineteenth century, of both biblical and environmental theories. The development of the discourse of 'race' did not entail a sudden and complete break with earlier representations and analyses of the Other. It was not until around mid-century that the race/ heredity analysis came to predominance, both within and without the scientific community. This is a shift which Nancy Stepan has seen in terms of a move from the optimism, universalism and humanism of the late eighteenth century, when it was still widely believed that humans were capable of change and adaptability, to the 'biological pessimism' of early Victorian Britain, with its emphasis on the unchangeability of human types.[41]

In order to more fully appreciate these elements of and changes in race thinking it is necessary to take one step back in order to consider the diverse roots of the race concept.

The origins of the race concept

The search for the origins of the race concept is rather like having sand fall through your fingers. As soon as you believe you have a grasp on some aspect of the ancestry of race thinking you then find it eludes a firm grip. A major reason for this is that the origins are so diffuse and multi-layered. The idea of race did not just suddenly appear, fully formed. It was an idea that gestated over a period of time, attached to various umbilical cords, drawing strength and shape from each.[42] While it is important to look at the role of eighteenth-century science as one of these, this should not be to ignore the contribution from the wider religious, philosophical, moral and political developments of that period. The concept of racial difference emerged out of an intellectual ferment – new and challenging

ways of thinking about man, man's relations with man and with his environment, nature and religion, all played their part in the birth, evolution and growth of race thinking. Ideas of leading thinkers linked with the assumptions, methods and practices of the eighteenth-century natural scientists to ease its birth.

In order to trace the roots of race thinking we are led into the earlier history of thinking about the origins, nature and significance of physical difference; about inequality between humans as against commonality and universality; about the permanence of types, evolution and the capacity of humans to change; and about the influence of the environment, climate and heredity.[43] At one moment we are heading towards the influence of the Enlightenment and the next we are on a path that stands in stark contrast to key enlightened ideas. It is necessary to consider the main currents of economic and political thought, the impact of the rise of the bourgeoisie and capitalist social relations, and the writings of medical men as well as the works of some of the most influential thinkers and philosophers of the time. Because of the universality of the problems being addressed, poets, travellers, theologians, anatomists, physiologists, ethnologists and many others all contributed to the debate. If the task is not already sufficiently daunting and ambitious, then Banton also suggests that in order to explain why race thinking occurred it is necessary to incorporate a discussion of socio-political, psychological, sociological and historical features.[44]

Some of the ideas contained within race thinking, such as notions of difference and superiority/inferiority, can be dated back to the origins of mankind itself and so, in one sense, have a place in the history of the race concept. Similarly, the identification of the first recorded use of the term provides a convenient and logical, if not especially rewarding, starting point. Adopting a different kind of approach, Ivan Hannaford, author of a major study of the history of the idea of race, has already expertly found traces of modern ideas of race in the protosciences of late medieval cabalism and hermeticism, whilst also acknowledging that this is to impose later ideas and concepts on previous historical epochs. Importantly, his text makes clear that in Greek and Roman times people were not perceived as distinct, biological, natural entities. Rather, the differences were political: aggregations of people bound together by a compact of law in an authoritative historical association.[45] Further traces were found by Hannaford in the sixteenth century when attempts were again made to identify the causes of human differences:

> They found them in witchcraft, sorcery, astrology, and natural infection of the humoral blood as well as in a wide variety of natural explanations in climate, language, and geography.[46]

However, it is from the mid-eighteenth century that most commentators begin their discussion of the origins of the modern race concept as it is from then that the term came to be used to explicitly divide humankind according to distinct physical differences. This dating is explained by Hannaford by the fact that,

before this time, there was no proper anthropology, natural history or biology to support it. Europeans needed to break from an essentially biblical frame of reference and accept the objective scientific method before race classification could develop fully The evolution of the concept of race and racial classification paralleled the growth and increased respect given to science and scientific knowledge from the second half of the eighteenth century on. Rational and logical research, measurement, demonstration and evidence became the essential foundations of a system of classifying human groups according to physical characteristics.[47] Science was looked to in order to provide the evidence for different types of mankind and, consciously or unconsciously, the scientists did not disappoint.

Race, medicine and science

The nature and place of science, scientific thought and scientific writings in the development of race theories have been dealt with extensively by all historians of the concept, resulting in a number of major studies of what is termed scientific racism. Indeed this factor has been singled out for more detailed consideration than any of the other contributory origins, and it is only recently, for example, that full consideration has been given to the relationship between race thinking and the Enlightenment.[48] The idea expressed in the work of Kenan Malik, that 'for racial theory to become more embedded in society it had to shed its feudal trappings and put on the mask of science',[49] is echoed throughout a great many texts. In a similar fashion, Elazar Barkan informs us that 'during the nineteenth century scientists reified the concept of race and endowed it with explanatory powers beyond its initial taxonomic purpose'.[50] What is more, Malik also refers to the important shift in the scientific outlook to positivism, which he explains as a change in the view of humans as social creatures governed by social laws to a view of humans as biological creatures governed by natural laws, which paved the way for racial science.

Elements of race thinking can be found in probably all the new and emergent sciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For some, such as philology, anthropology and ethnology, it became the dominant analytical framework for study.[51] To these could also be added anatomy, physiology, histology and palaeontology: hardly any branch of science or scientific investigation was free of the race paradigm.

The science of philology, or the study of language, dates from the late eighteenth century and the studies of men such as Sir William Jones, Jacob Grimm and Franz Bopp.[52] The importance of this in relation to the study of race was to become most apparent in the nineteenth century when language combined with nascent nationalism to form the solid basis of distinct and separate racial and national identities.[53] Indeed, language soon became the main 'test of race' and 'affinity of language' was thought to prove 'affinity of race'.[54] Physical anthropology similarly emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, and

was concerned with the evolution of mankind as an animal, and with man's societies, customs, culture, language and place in nature. George Mosse, in his study of European racial thought in the nineteenth century, states that these concerns grew out of a curiosity with distant lands and their inhabitants and, using comparative anatomical measurements (anthropometry), anthropologists became preoccupied with classifying the varieties of mankind into fixed, different species, or races.[55] Phrenology, a science briefly in vogue in the 1820s, also took up the idea that the inner man could be discovered through external conformations. It was believed that mental faculties were located in distinct parts of the brain and that these could be identified by feeling the bumps on the outside of the head.[56] The lasting importance of phrenology to the race concept has been noted by Kenan Malik:

> Phrenology itself had waned in popularity by the 1840s as its assertions were disproved. But while the conclusions drawn by phrenology were discredited, its influence was nevertheless long-lasting because its fundamental principle, that individual function must correspond with different parts of the brain, was accepted by most biologists.[57]

Moreover, this fundamental principle extended beyond the biologists, and the idea that there existed a determining relationship between external physical features and the inner self was taken to a wider public by, for example, the 'quack' phrenologists at travelling shows and fairs. This belief that the skull provided the key to human difference was further developed in the nineteenth century with the new, if briefly-lived, sciences of craniology, cephology and biometry.[58] But however short their life span these sciences provided the basis on which many of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writings on race were based.[59]

As mentioned, anatomical measurements became the key scientific method of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century racial scientists, whether of skull shape, facial angle, craniometry or the cephalic index. Even when this method was revealed as faulty, or the measurement of one feature proved inconclusive, the scientists simply moved to the measurement of another anatomical characteristic. When the measurement of the exterior skull by phrenologists and craniologists was found to be wanting in relation to determining intelligence, the investigations simply moved to the interior skull and cranial size and capacity. When these in turn proved unsuccessful or inconclusive in determining the boundaries between the races, attention turned to the 'fissures and convolutions' of the brain and even to the structure of human hair.[60] The racial scientists only reluctantly relinquished their belief in the power of statistics and measurement, and they continued to make assumptions, unproved by evidence, about the relationship between the skull and intellectual abilities.[61]

The names of a relatively limited number of key individuals recur in probably all the histories of the race concept. However, this should not be taken as meaning they all shared the same ideas about race. They often disagreed with each other and held manifestly opposed viewpoints on certain key issues. Even so, each, in their own ways, contributed to the growth of what is generally termed racial science. To see them as race thinkers or race scientists should not necessarily, though, lead us to the view that they were consciously racist. With hindsight, and to the twentieth-century mind, their methods were undoubtedly crude and their conclusions based on inadequate or faulty evidence. However, it is important to remember that, first and foremost, they were men of science, eager to apply their knowledge and training to the key questions about mankind, civilisation and the environment which were occupying the attention of the philosophers, politicians and theologians of the time. Inevitably, their work, the assumptions they took to it and the conclusions they reached would have been framed and limited by a range of contemporary influences and thinking on such crucial concerns as slavery, nation and class.[62]

These men of medicine and science came from the different countries of Europe but the shared ideas and methods allow us to think of them as part of an international community rather than as nationally isolated individuals. For the eighteenth century the pioneers of race thinking are commonly identified as the Swedish botanist Carl von Linnaeus, the French naturalist Comte de Buffon and the German physician Friedrich Blumenbach. To these names can also be added those of Lamarck and François Bernier. Although the views of each showed subtle variations, they all can be seen as exponents of some form of environmentalist theory on the origins of difference.

François Bernier's (1625–1688) anonymously published work of 1684 is generally thought to be the first published classification of people into separate physical types: Europeans, Far Easterners, 'blacks' and Lapps. However, little attention seems to have been given to this and it was not until the eighteenth century that this method of human division took a firm hold. Carl von Linnaeus (Carol Linné) (1707–1778), a Swedish naturalist and professor of botany, in his 1735 work *The System of Nature,* combined observation and description with subjective judgement, sharing therefore a methodology with many other scientists and commentators of his time. His main contribution to race thinking was his development of a taxonomic system based on skin colour, which prepared the way for nineteenth-century racial classification and the science of anthropology.[63] Significantly, his classification did not remain simply concerned with outward appearance and physical features, and extended to include moral, behavioural, linguistic and intellectual qualities also.[64] George Mosse in particular has drawn attention to the middle-class moral judgements evident in Linnaeus' work: 'As one of the most influential pioneers of racial classification he reflected that urge toward subjectivity in the ranking of race which was to be the trend for the future.'[65] Like Lamarck, he also accorded great weight to the influence of the environment in causing human difference, holding also to the

monogenist view of the common origin of all mankind. The major difference with Lamarck was that he did not allow for any hereditary basis to human variation.

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), French encyclopaedist and author of the multi-volume *A Natural History, General and Particular,* published between 1749 and 1804, is included in the history of race thinkers, as he, like Bernier before him, also divided humans into separate physical types. However, he did not believe that the differences were permanent and forwarded an environmentalist explanation of difference. He perceived a combination of climate, diet, habitation, manners and customs as determining variations in humans. Peter (Petrus) Camper (1722–1789), a Dutch anatomist and painter, contributed to the race concept the notion that difference could be identified by means of the facial angle.[66] Camper, like others, could not escape the temptation of adding to the objective measuring of the 'facial index', devised in the 1770s, his personal ranking according to levels of beauty of head profiles.[67]

Jean Baptiste Chevalier Lamarck (1744–1829), a French naturalist, is frequently mentioned in the context of race thinking partly because of his influence on the ideas of both the monogenists and the polygenists, but also because of his position within Enlightenment thought and his views on the role played by the environment in determining the nature and mutation of species. If the environment remained constant, then each successive generation was likely to show the same characteristics, acquired through inheritance. But as species are able to adapt, then if the environment changed adaptations would occur and this process of learning would also be passed on through inheritance to the next generation, resulting in a change from the original type. In his view, no race was forever locked into its present characteristics, though if the environment stayed the same there would be little change from type. His theory allowed for the possibility of change whilst also permitting constancy.[68]

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), a natural scientist and anatomist, described by many as the father of anthropology, is seen as probably the most prominent and significant of all the early commentators on human difference.[69] In particular, Blumenbach was responsible for the first explicit identification of the separate races of man in his 1775 text *De Generis Humani Varietate Nativa Liber (On the Natural Varieties of Mankind).* He initially proposed a fourfold classification, based on a combination of skin colour, hair and the formation of the head, but later amended this to a fivefold division of racial types, which provided the basis for many later theorists. Of the five variations, three were seen as the most important: Caucasian, Mongolian and Ethiopian. The remaining two, American and Malay, were seen as transitional stages, the former from Caucasian to Mongolian and the latter from Caucasian to Ethiopian. Despite identifying these different types Blumenbach also said that they overlapped and that it was impossible to mark out the boundaries between peoples.

Significantly, then, Blumenbach did not write in terms of fixed and immutable types, seeing instead the capacity of all peoples for physical, moral and political

improvement and development.[70] Nor did Blumenbach believe in the inherent inferiority of any race.[71] By allowing for the changeability of type and not accepting notions of hierarchies, Blumenbach does not hold two of the main, if not essential, components of what is usually termed race thinking. However, his allocation of primary significance to physical difference and his anatomical measurements of facial angles and cranial capacity ensure his place in the history of the concept. Hannaford accords key roles to Blumenbach, Linnaeus and Buffon, as it was they 'who began the painstaking process of classifying and comparing man anatomically alongside the primates and attributing human differences to the law of nature'.[72] Similarly, Elazar Barkan attributes to Blumenbach the formulation of a terminology of physical anthropology which classified humankind into the colour categories of black, brown, yellow, red and white, corresponding to the five divisions mentioned above.[73] As with Linnaeus, it is possible to clearly identify both objective methods and subjective assessment in the work of Blumenbach. Much in keeping with the dominant thinking of his time, Blumenbach also stressed the importance of environmental factors in explaining differences in the colour and form of mankind, to which he then added subjective judgements concerning physical and temperamental beauty.[74]

The name of Franz Joseph Gall, variously described as a German physician and an Austrian anatomist, appears in the rogues' gallery of racial theorists for the way that he developed the idea, dating back at least until the sixteenth century, that individual character and mental ability could be determined from the shape of the head, which itself revealed the thirty-seven faculties of the mind. That is, inner qualities and character could be identified from external features, and these in turn informed and explained the social and cultural differences between races. These ideas and methods of phrenology were subsequently taken up by Anders Retzius (1796–1860) and Paul Broca (1824–1880), a craniologist, Parisian brain surgeon and inventor of the cephalic index. Measurements of skulls became increasingly sophisticated as the nineteenth century progressed and evidence for constancy between generations gave weight to the arguments of heredity over environment.

Georges Leopold Cuvier (1769–1832), the pioneer of comparative anatomy and author of *Animal Kingdom* (1797), proposed a threefold and fixed hierarchical classification: white, yellow and black. Cuvier was a monogenist and, according to Banton and Harwood, a catastrophic theorist, believing that after Adam there had been a series of natural catastrophes which killed off many of the species, with the ancestors of the three major races, Ham, Shem and Japheth, heading off in different directions and forming the basis of permanent physical types: Caucasian, Mongolian and Ethiopian, with the Caucasian superior in beauty, intellect and culture. Cuvier is also noteworthy for seeing physical causes as the basis of cultural difference.[75] These ideas were taken up by two of the most prominent British racial theorists of the day, Robert Knox (1791–1862) and James Hunt (1833–1869).

Robert Knox was a Scottish anatomist and former pupil of Cuvier, and author of *The Races of Man,* subsequently described as the most comprehensive statement on race thinking in the period.[76] For Knox, to repeat again his often-quoted opening statement, 'race, or hereditary descent, is everything'. Although Knox's ideas have been said to be 'jumbled and confusing',[77] there can be little doubt that the main thrust of his argument concerned the permanence and immutability of the separate races,[78] and the notion that cultural differences were caused by inherited physical variations.[79] Knox was adopting a fairly crude racial determinism in which races would not, or could not, adapt to changes in the environment and where all else, religion, culture, art and morals, stemmed from being born into a particular racial type.

James Hunt, a West Country physician and founder of the Anthropological Society of London, also shared the belief that race differences were everything, and he was to become 'the most effective publicist of racial typology in Britain'.[80] Hunt used craniology and comparative anatomy to prove the validity of the racial taxonomic system, using skull shape and size as the main determinants. This method was later followed by further anthropometric investigations of racial difference which took in measurements of the entire skeleton and included tests on brain sense and motor function.

A major vehicle for the dissemination of these ideas was the Anthropological Society, formed in 1863 following Hunt's departure from the Ethnological Society owing to a major clash of views with James Cowles Prichard.[81] The divisions went far beyond the polygenist views of the former and the monogenist ideas of the latter and rather picked up the contrast between the humanist racial views of Prichard and the more explicitly racist opinions of Hunt. As well as the importance of the variations in race thinking indicated here, it is also of significance that race ideas by the middle to late nineteenth century had become institutionalised in learned societies. Barkan notes how this was a phenomenon occurring in many of the major cities, in Europe and America, and that these societies 'testified to – and provided the locus for – the growing interest in the scientific study of race, which reinforced notions of the hierarchy, antiquity, and immutability of human races'.[82]

To focus on the more extreme and uncompromising views of Knox and Hunt is, though, to give a misleading impression of race thinking in nineteenth-century Britain. Although he is described as a racial theorist, the work and writings of James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848) were of a very different kind.

Prichard, a physician by profession and author of *The Natural History of Man* (1843), has been variously described as the founder of English anthropology and as an ethnologist, philologist, monogenist, diffusionist, environmentalist, humanist and universalist.[83] Prichard supported the notion of a single unified human species while still recognising 'bewildering individual variety'.[84] Confusingly, he is also said to have refused to accept the idea of the inherent inferiority of any race[85] and yet, elsewhere, is accused of believing in ideas of innate inferiority, and also to have believed, unconventionally, that mixed races

were superior to pure types.[86] However, one issue that does not appear to be contested is Prichard's influential contribution to the development of the race concept, and Nancy Stepan goes so far as to claim that up to his death in 1848 British racial science was 'Prichardian'.[87] Michael Banton's inaugural professorial lecture on race began with a portrait of this Bristol physician, seen as the world's leading authority on race in the first half of the nineteenth century.[88] Prichard's place in the history of race stems from his classification of humans according to external, physical features and his belief that characteristic differences were permanently transmitted. Although he is traditionally portrayed as a monogenist, seeing all humans as belonging to one species, this idea of permanent variety, in the opinion of Horsman, makes his ideas in practice little different from those of the polygenists.[89] While there is certainly some basis for this view, which is one which serves to compound the confused blurring between the monogenist/polygenist debate, Prichard's voice was quite distinctive in certain respects. Prichard was not just a crude determinist. He allowed for the influence of the environment on some physical features, such as skin colour, and for the impact of manner of living on bodily structure. Interestingly, on the question of the origins of racial difference Prichard travelled in an opposite direction to most of his contemporaries, moving in the course of his life from an hereditary to a climatological explanation. Also, unlike other racial theorists, Prichard was uninterested in connecting physical difference with other, social, cultural or mental variations. That is, while physical difference was the primary method of distinguishing varieties of mankind it was not the basis or cause of other variations. However, what best marks Prichard from Knox, Hunt and other racial thinkers is his essential humanism and universalism, which permitted an optimistic view of non-white races that was not typical of his time.

From even this admittedly brief survey of key scientific thinkers and practitioners, it is evident that ideas on race and classification were far from uniform. To complicate matters still further, later commentators forward different interpretations of the work of these individuals in relation to such matters as inferiority/superiority of races, the permanence of type, and the role of heredity as against other determinants of difference. Moreover, some of the men discussed were inconsistent within their own works and also changed their views over time. Although it would be a difficult if not impossible task to try and resolve or unravel these differences and problems, this should not be to ignore them. Indeed, it is precisely this complicated variety in the origins of race thinking which gives the concept a flexibility and broad application that have contributed to its strength.

Race and the Enlightenment

While the contribution of the Enlightenment to the race concept has long been recognised, it is only in recent years that full-length studies have emerged.[90] Once again, commentators fail to agree on the precise nature of the relationship

between the Enlightenment and race thinking. Eze attempts to explore the ways in which 'the "race idea" might be a key component of metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy, in Kant or other major Enlightenment thinkers'.[91] His conclusion, briefly stated, is that the concept of race gained widespread currency in European Enlightenment scientific and socio-political discourse. Adopting a similar perspective, Hannaford locates the Enlightenment in what he identifies as the first stage in the development of the race idea, from 1684 to 1815. A recent and more controversial argument can be found in the work of Kenan Malik, who suggests that the modern concept of race developed in opposition to, not out of, Enlightenment thought.[92]

One approach to the problem is to adopt the same investigative method used when considering the role of science: namely, to identify the key individuals whose work and writings contributed to the race idea. This, though, proves to be a somewhat contradictory line of enquiry to follow. Malik argues that some Enlightened thinkers, such as Voltaire and David Hume (1711–1776), did incorporate ideas of race into their works, believing in difference and the natural inferiority of blacks to whites.[93] But they were the exceptions. For the most part, he argues, Enlightenment thinkers did not adopt racial classifications, physical difference was not accorded any especial significance, and notions of superiority and inferiority were generally absent. The analysis offered by Eze differs from this, adding the names of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and Hegel to those of Hume and Voltaire for the way in which they represented the contemporary belief in Europe's cultural and racial superiority.[94] Eze continues, 'Enlightenment philosophy was instrumental in codifying and institutionalising both the scientific and popular European perceptions of the human race.'[95]

A more productive, and indeed seductive, approach is to consider the Enlightenment from a broader perspective and to see it as a time when questions to do with mankind, man's relations with man and with nature were explored in new ways, free from the constraints, beliefs and superstitions of the past.[96] The authority of the church was in decline and the biblical story of creation was under threat from science and reason. In this sense the Enlightenment should be understood as a period of intellectual awakening, opening up new and challenging ways of thinking. Seen in this way, the diversity of thought contained within the broad umbrella of the Enlightenment becomes part of the new debate. The Enlightenment philosophers were searching for new ways of understanding the world, bodily structure and endowment, and the mind. Concepts of logic, reason and empiricism assisted the process. It is argued that these concepts allied themselves to the new scientific methods of observation and categorisation, and the classification of peoples by means of observable differences was one outcome. Mosse notes the next stage in this process:

> The enlightenment quest for unity, coherence and community, and an emphasis on the 'inner man' led to a belief that the 'inner man' could be read through his outward appearance.[97]

At this point, the Enlightenment and the 'findings' of contemporary scientists came together. The Enlightenment and the emerging status of science should therefore be seen as interlocking and reinforcing processes. As commented by Kenan Malik, 'the Enlightenment philosophers helped establish the modern scientific method through their synthesis of two previously separate philosophical traditions – rationalism and empiricism'.[98] The significance of this, as indicated in the earlier discussion of the role of science, is that this modern method was based on a comprehensive range of assumptions about racial difference. Empiricism provided the tabulated and measured evidence, and the rationalist explanation for difference rested on ideas of innate features.

However, both Eze and Malik offer qualifications to their own arguments. Eze talks of the relationship of Enlightenment philosophic and scientific reason to racial diversity in the eighteenth century as being ambiguous, and Malik goes one stage further to indicate ways in which race thinking stood in direct contradiction to essential Enlightenment ideas. To some degree their arguments seem to overlap. On the one side, the Enlightenment represented the opening of minds, the excitement, challenge and adventure of new ways of thinking about mankind, the appeal of objective and rational science, and the desire to order and explain. The other side, however, reveals beliefs and values associated with the Enlightenment which do not fit with emergent racial thought. Malik begins his argument by suggesting that ideas of reason and faith in the scientific method do not themselves imply a racial viewpoint. He continues:

> That in the nineteenth century science, reason and universalism came to be harnessed to a discourse of race is a development that has to be explained through historical analysis, it is not logically given by the nature of scientific or rational thought.[99]

Moreover, the Enlightened belief in progress, in the potential equality of mankind and the ability of man to learn, change and develop, and in a common, universal human nature is seen as undermining any form of racial categorisation of humankind. This view is reinforced by Thomas Gossett, who suggests that the Enlightened philosophers would have been 'uncomfortable' with notions of innate character and intelligence which did not fit with the Enlightened belief that at birth the mind of the child was an empty vessel waiting to be filled. Such enlightened optimism did not allow sympathy with the pessimistic racial notion of predestination and innate, fixed character and ability.

This ambiguous, complex and contradictory relationship of the Enlightenment to race thinking is perhaps not as surprising as it might first appear. There is a tendency when talking of the Enlightenment to assume that it means a shared and uniform body of ideas. While undoubtedly the Enlightenment thinkers influenced and borrowed from each other, it was also the case that differences existed not only between the expression of those ideas in different national contexts but also

in terms of the ideas themselves. Inevitably these variations and contrasts within the movement would find their varied interpretation among the race theorists.

Understandably the history of the origins of race thinking focuses on these two main areas of science and the Enlightenment. However, the picture would be incomplete without some understanding of a range of other contemporary contributory movements and forces.

Race and voyages of discovery

The eighteenth-century fascination with ordering and classifying the natural world was given extra stimulus with the further opening up of geographical areas, and so also peoples, previously unknown.[100] The journeys, from around the 1750s on, of medical, trade and scientific exploration, voyages of discovery and missionary endeavours of dedicated Christians, brought a vastly expanded natural world into view. The peoples of Africa, South America, India and the Orient were looked on as objects of fascination and mystery requiring investigation and explanation. The immediate impressions would have been ones of contrast and difference, comparing the familiar and civilised Europe with the strange and backward ways, culture and people of distant lands. Such perceptions were published in popular travel writings, records by medical men and missionary accounts, which were taken to as wide an audience as possible in the effort to attract continued funding.[101]

Race and colonialism

In many cases, given that most of the distant lands visited were under colonial rule, differences were perceived in a relationship of superior/inferior, coloniser/colonised, master/slave, developed/undeveloped, civilised/backward. For some commentators, notably Marxists, the appearance of race thinking in the period of colonial expansion was more than mere coincidence. Scientific racism is dated from the 1760s and 1770s, the period when there was greater commercial contact and territorial conquest, and when the British government first turned its attention to the problem of ruling territory with ‘natives’ in Bengal. The Marxist analysis then develops this into a causal relationship that, on the surface, has a logical attraction. Race thinking was formulated and disseminated as the ideological support for an unequal relationship between countries and peoples, often expressed through the debates about slavery. Imperial relations demanded an explanation of, and justification for, such inequality and the race concept provided the key. It became the destiny of the white races, assumed to be intellectually, culturally and politically superior, to rule over the black.

The problem with this analysis is that it can suggest a deliberate and conscious action on the part of the political and economic elite to find a theoretical and ideological rationale for their programme of exploitation. There can be little doubt that the concept of racism was used as one component of the ideological

justification of empire; yet to accept this function is not necessarily to say that one caused the other. Origins cannot be explained by looking at functions, even though there might be a connection between the two, and it is insufficient simply to point to the coincidence of the race concept and colonialism. To a large degree the argument falters because of lack of proof and, as commented by G. Watson in his study of ideology and English politics, there is no clear *evidence* that British imperialism and Victorian doctrines of race are linked in any causal way.[102] Although this book was written more than twenty-five years ago, we are still no closer to finding that 'clear evidence', and the argument, however appealing, remains more convincing in respect of functions than it does of origins.[103]

An insistence on the inferiority of non-Western peoples underpinned racial theory, and the race concept was, it has been argued, both a cause and product of the European colonisation of the world. However, ideas of difference were not just about the West versus the rest, they also arose out of differences within and between Western European states.

Race and nationalism

If imperialism was one major movement providing the context in which race thinking must be set, then nationalism provides the other. Banton and Harwood, offering a corrective to the Marxist emphasis on imperialism, link race thinking with the emergence of nations and national competition, arguing that 'the main ideological influence upon the theorists of racial types was almost certainly not that of Europe's relations with black peoples but rather the tensions within Europe itself'.[104] Similarly, Elazar Barkan describes nationalism as the 'driving force' behind racial differentiation.[105] Again, it is difficult to prove any precise causal relationship between the race concept and ideas of nationalism, but the timing of their emergence and shared concerns inevitably meant not only that they grew up together but also that they grew into each other.[106] It was not long before the concepts became virtually synonymous, bringing together as one, race, nation and state. The idea of state and nation had become coterminous with the single, exclusive idea of race. The emergence of nation-states and the stirrings of nationalism stimulated a search for a separate and unique national identity to be found in the past and a common history of a people sharing particular and peculiar (racial) characteristics. As well as different pasts, the different nations were said to be comprised of people with distinct physical features, character, temperament and culture. Nation and race were to be revealed in language and blood purity. The creation of a *völkisch* and Aryan racial identity and the idea of Anglo-Saxonism should be understood as part of this process.[107] The early ethnologists and anthropologists were as much influenced by the stirrings of national sentiment as the theorists of nationalism were informed by notions of separate races. Where one contributed objective rational thought, the other provided the mystery or 'spiritual substance' of race:

> The mythological and spiritual roots of race were equated with the national origins: the past of a race and its history [were] identical with the history of the nation.[108]

This concern with a mythological, organic past was a prominent feature of the early nineteenth-century Romantic movement.[109] Although the movement was diverse it seems to be generally accepted that it stood broadly opposed to the universalist values of the Enlightenment and the consequences of industrialisation and capitalism. In their place it offered a renewed emphasis on tradition, hierarchy, inequality and unreason, and so, in the opinion of Kenan Malik, within this conservative/Romantic reaction 'we shall find the genesis of the modern discourse of race'.[110] It is in the context of the dual emergence of the race concept and nationalism that the study of language, or philology, came to play a key part. Not only was the history of a language a means of discovering racial roots, but it also could form an essential ingredient of present national identity.[111] The most obvious and extreme example of this, given its expression and consequences under Nazism, was the development through history, ethnology and linguistics of the Aryan myth.

Race and capitalism

The final area which needs to be considered in identifying the origins and genesis of race thinking is the nature of social and economic change taking place within Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In an argument which closely parallels the Marxist analysis linking race and imperialism, Michael Banton argues that race was a concept developed in order to interpret the new social relations of capitalism.[112] It is possible to find a similar argument in the work of Malik, who identified the crucial role played by the bourgeoisie and capitalist social relations in evolving and confirming the belief that inequality was natural, and in so doing subverted the emancipatory universalism of the Enlightenment and stimulated the modern concept of race:

> The idea of 'race' developed as a way of explaining the persistence of social divisions in a society that proclaimed its belief in equality. Racial theories accounted for social inequalities by ascribing them to nature…. Today, the concept of race is so intertwined with the idea of 'colour' that it is often difficult to comprehend the Victorian notion of race. For the Victorians race was a description of social distinctions, not of colour differences.[113]

Race thinking thus provided the rationale and justification for social inequalities much as it performed the same function for imperialism. By focusing on the emergence of capitalism and capitalist relations, attention is drawn to the differences *within* European society and within particular states. Hence class and

class relations, gender and gender relations, and even the differences between the settled and itinerant populations came to be expressed in the racial language of fixed, permanent difference, physical and mental, and in terms of superiority/inferiority.[114] If we understand race as essentially a description of differences in physical traits, language, behaviour, customs and potential for civilisation, then it is evident how this typology was used to fit not only Western perceptions of people from the dark continents but also middle-class visions (and fears) of the unknown England of the inner cities. The social investigations and reportage of Henry Mayhew, among others, into the metropolitan poor and outcast London provide unequivocal testimony to the notion of the working class as a 'race apart'.

The hardening of the race concept in Victorian society

Without exception, all commentators on the race concept refer to the nineteenth century as a time when ideas of race spread and hardened. Many explanations are put forward for this, with particular emphasis given to the role of imperial expansion overseas, industrial growth, class conflict and fears of racial degeneration at home, international competition and the spread of nationalism, and the key place held by science and especially comparative anatomy.[115] Moreover, ideas were able to gain a wider circulation with the growth of communication technologies, the spread of literacy and the emergence of forms of mass culture. Events overseas, such as the China War, the Crimean War, the Indian 'mutiny', the American Civil War, the Jamaican uprising of 1865 and 'other colonial involvements', provided further and important stimuli to the hardening of race thinking as their analysis and representation at home was phrased in overtly racial terms by politicians and in press reporting that reached increasing numbers of people. In short, imperialism turned race thinking into a mass force which became 'the property of the many', with British political, military and economic adventures overseas providing the basis on which were built theories of white superiority.[116]

The powerful hold of race thinking in its various meanings was such, then, that its application and acceptance extended widely throughout Victorian society. Michael Biddiss writes about the ways that race ideas 'penetrated to a wider public', with the importance of race being simply assumed and becoming part of everyday vocabulary.[117] Race classification and the creation of racial hierarchies were seldom criticised.[118] The primacy of physical difference, fixed and innate characteristics, and notions of superiority/inferiority was widely taken as a self-evident truth.[119] There was a desire, sometimes made explicit, to fix the boundaries between groups, whether defined by race, nationality, class or gender.

Race thinking began as an elite theory largely, though not exclusively, emerging from the ranks of science. By the middle and late decades of the nineteenth century the concept had diffused downwards through newspapers,

high- and low-brow literature, popular entertainment, and was even celebrated in the education system through glorification of the British race and its exploits in history. In short, central to the argument concerning the spread of race thinking was that it penetrated beyond the scientific community, and extended into many other spheres, intruding into the popular consciousness through discourses on the 'other'.

Race ideas were being legitimised, reinforced, repeated, popularised and confirmed by their pervasiveness in scientific thought and practice, in popular culture, in academic and political circles, and were shared by both dominant and subordinate groups. The race concept was institutionalised through the anthropological societies which emerged in the major cities of Europe and America, providing the international scientific network to ensure its consolidation within an influential intellectual community.[120] Racial typology was also adapted and extended through the ideas of social Darwinism and eugenics, the former adapting evolutionary theory through ideas of struggle and the survival of the (racially) fittest, and the latter advocating the primacy of heredity over the environment.[121] Growing attention given to racial issues could be found, for example, in literary quarterlies, and J.C. Nott and G.R. Glidden's *Types of Mankind* was published in England in 1854 to favourable reviews, adding more weight to the racial analysis of humans. Although it was written twenty years ago, George Mosse's study of the centrality of race thinking in the European political tradition, showing it to be not an aberration but an integral feature, remains a powerful argument.[122]

Inevitably, much of Victorian racial discourse was concerned with images and representations of other, usually black, peoples.[123] Elazar Barkan, in illustrating the extent to which racial ideas of inherent white superiority had become ingrained in Victorian society, writes:

> By the turn of the [nineteenth] century, racial theories which constructed a hierarchy of races with Nordics at the top were considered factual, free of prejudice and generally pertinent to social and political analysis.[124]

The notion that the ideas were simply accepted, were not seen as morally or intellectually unacceptable, and became the basis for analysis of peoples, events and situations is of paramount importance. Although to twentieth-century eyes these views and methods were the product and expression of racial prejudice and should correctly be seen as (scientific) racism, this perspective was one which could only develop later. To the Victorian, alternative ways of viewing themselves and others were scarcely present, and only then to a small circle of more liberal and enlightened thinkers.

The hardening of the category also incorporated a shift in the balance of the components of the concept itself, with ideas relating to environmental influences and the capacity of peoples to change increasingly being replaced by the notion that differences were hereditary, innate and permanent, and such that some

peoples could never advance as far as others.[125] Race was seen as the driving force, the explanation of and justification for hierarchy. The idea, from Robert Knox, that race was everything, an explanation of all human affairs, was commonly believed and widely absorbed, even amongst those who would not have considered themselves to be racist. As well as settling and confirming divisions, the race concept therefore also possessed an important explanatory function. Michael Biddiss, in his review of race thinking in the history of the European social and political order from the mid-nineteenth century to 1945, writes of

> the relative systematic attempts at using race as the primary or even sole means of explaining the workings of society and politics, the course of history, the development of culture and civilisation, even the nature of morality itself…. There was nothing new in an ethnocentric conviction about the pre-eminence of one's own group or culture. But never before had this been asserted so systematically in terms of an inherent bio-scientific superiority.[126]

Race was used to explain the past, understand and justify the present, and predict the future. It was used to explain criminality and class and gender relations of inequality. At every level of human existence, from the individual to the nation-state, race was employed as rationale and justification.

The arguments concerning the spread of race thinking in the nineteenth century appear persuasive. It is partly because of this solid and extensive base that the race concept managed to retain its currency and durability into the twentieth century. Although, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, the race concept was scientifically discredited by the 1950s, the 1970s have also been identified as the period of resurgence in racial thought among certain scientists within the academic community who endeavoured once more to give this system of classification an objective, scientific basis.[127] Race science re-emerged, almost unscathed, with the intelligence tests of Eysenck and Cyril Burt and, later, with sociobiology.[128] Concepts of race and ethnicity grew into each other, intertwined in a tight mesh of ideas, methods and behaviour. Moreover, thinking in racial categories persisted in the popular imagination and wider cultural discourse, and remained as a major part of the language around difference. Cornell and Hartmann speak of the continuing 'monumental power' of race, and add that

> In many societies, the idea of biologically distinct races remains a fixture in the popular mind, a basis of social action, a foundation of government policy, and often a justification for distinctive treatment of one group by another.[129]

The apartheid system in South Africa and the genocidal policies in Africa and Europe are chilling reminders of just how short memories can be and how long-lived and deep-rooted are the attitudes and beliefs encoded within race thinking, even if on occasion they are wrapped in the language of ethnicity.

Race as socially constructed

Although the strands that formed race thinking had, in some instances, a long history, their coming together to create the notion of race and racial difference can be historically located, albeit imprecisely. In this sense, the concept is a product of its time and of quite specific, if diverse, contributory causes, coincidences and occurrences. This typology, and the body of ideas associated with it, appeared at a particular conjuncture, and to all but a very few offered answers to age-old questions concerning the nature of mankind and insights into such contemporary concerns as nationhood and identity.

There now appears to be general agreement that the idea of race should be seen as a social fabrication and invention. Ivan Hannaford has argued that the concept of race was the outcome of a 'vast excrescence of recent thought on descent, generation and inheritance',[130] and elsewhere it is variously described as something socially defined and constructed rather than naturally given, and as socially imagined rather than biological reality.[131] However, to argue for construction is not necessarily to imply that it was a conscious or deliberate process intended to fulfil particular aims and purposes. Rather, it is indicative of both the extent and range, and of the limitations, of knowledge, attitudes and assumptions about human types and human difference current at the time. Although ostensibly based in the scientific gods of empiricism and objectivity, the work of the racial scientists, from Linnaeus and Broca to Eysenck and Burt, is now seen as the misdirected endeavour to provide the evidence to support already-held beliefs in the linear and hierarchical ranking of peoples.[132]

Race thinking, then, was fed by various tributaries which it pooled into a new concept concerning mankind. The appeal of the concept was, and remains, that it provided answers or explanations for questions and problems as old as mankind itself: why are people physically dissimilar? Why are some people more intelligent than others? Why are some civilisations advanced and others backward? The race concept provided a seemingly rational and easily understandable explanation of individual character and temperament and, more broadly, of human, social and societal development. The problems with this system of classification were noted by some contemporaries, and were further developed into a more substantial critique during the inter-war years, but it was not until the horrors of the Holocaust that the term came to be seen as scientifi cally, morally, politically and intellectually unacceptable. However, this is the subject of a later discussion and before considering these critiques, and the replacement of race with the concept of ethnicity, we need to look at how race thinking

influenced, and continues to influence, the way that Gypsies are defined and represented.

Notes

1 'Gipsies', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* Vol. xlix, January–June 1866, pp. 565–580.
2 'The Gipsies', *European Magazine,* Vol. lxx, September 1816, pp. 240–241.
3 William A. Dutt, 'With the East Anglian Gypsies', *Good Words,* Vol. 37, 1896, pp. 120–126.
4 Vernon Morwood, 'English Gipsies', *Victoria Magazine,* Vol. 9, 1867, p. 292.
5 *Ibid.*
6 This chapter is not intended to make a new contribution to the growing literature on the history of the race concept but rather to provide a path through the extensive though often confusing body of works in order to locate thinking and writing about the racial Gypsy in the broader context.
7 Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood, *The Race Concept* (Newton Abbot and London, 1975), p. 13; Charles Husband, 'Introduction: "race", the continuity of a concept', in Charles Husband (ed.), *'Race' in Britain, Continuity and Change* (London, 1982), pp. 12–13.
8 Michael Banton takes Foxe's *Book of Martyrs,* 1570 as an example of this *(Racial Consciousness,* London, 1988, p. 16); Ivan Hannaford informs us that the word entered the Spanish, Italian, French, English and Scottish languages during the period 1200–1500, and adds that it did not have the meaning we attach to it now *(Race: The History of an Idea,* Baltimore and London, 1996, pp. 4–5).
9 Hannaford (1996), p. 147.
10 Michael Banton, 'Analytical and folk concepts of race and ethnicity', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1979, p. 134; Michael Banton, *The Idea of Race* (London, 1977), p. 27.
11 Ivan Hannaford (1996, p. 6) dates the full conceptualisation of the idea of race from the late eighteenth century, when it 'became deeply embedded in our understandings and explanations of the world'; Michael Banton (1977, p. 18) identifies the change in meaning from the idea of lineage to the category of fixed type as occurring around 1800.
12 Banton (1977), p. 4. Similarly, Nancy Stepan noted that 'The word "race". was given a great variety of meanings in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was used to refer to cultural, religious, national, linguistic, ethnic and geographical groups of human beings.' See N. Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800–1960* (Basingstoke and London, 1982), p. xvii.
13 See Banton (1988), p. 21; Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann refer to the 'slipperiness' of the concept *(Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World,* London, 1998, p. 21); see also Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (eds), *Racism* (Oxford, 1999), p. 7.
14 P. Curtin, '"Scientific" racism and the British theory of empire', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria,* Vol. 11, 1969, pp. 40–51.
15 Banton (1979).

16 Curtin (1969) has identified the teleological, evolutionary and a combination of the teleological and evolutionary with elements of Christian tradition; Hannaford (1996, p. 262) distinguishes types of racial thinking into monogenist, polygenist, transformist, creationist, vestigialist, culturist and environmentalist. Siân Jones *(The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present,* London, 1997, p. 41) identifies two different conceptions, or traditions, of race: (i) a physical anthropological tradition which was closely aligned with comparative anatomy; and (ii) an ethnological tradition linked to comparative linguistics and existing national traditions of Christian chronology dating from the sixteenth century.
17 See Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 80. For a comment on the correlation of race with national, cultural and linguistic groups see Jones (1997), p. 43.
18 See Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, 1992).
19 Ruth Benedict, *Race and Racism* (London, 1983; first published 1942), p. 19.
20 See Mark Harrison, '"The tender frame of man": disease, climate and racial difference in India and the West Indies, 1760–1860', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* Vol. 70, Spring 1996, pp. 68–93.
21 See Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal, 1982), p. 122; Michael Banton, 'What do we mean by "racism"?', *New Society,* 10 April 1969, pp. 551–554; Barkan (1992), p. 15.
22 See J. Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition* (New York, 1965; 1st edn, 1938), pp. 19–21.
23 Husband (1982), p. 18.
24 MacDougall (1982), p. 122.
25 Michael Banton, 'The concept of racism', in S. Zubaida (ed.), *Race and Racialism* (London, 1970), p. 26.
26 Banton and Harwood (1975), p. 32.
27 Benedict (1983), p. 63; George L. Mosse *(Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism,* London, 1978, p. 16) notes that hierarchical classification emerged from diverse notions of the natural order, ancient mythology, travellers' tales and aesthetic prejudice. Indeed racial hierarchies can be seen as the biological equivalent to the ranking systems that had previously been applied to religion, culture and civilisation.
28 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936).
29 See Robert Miles, *Racism* (London, 1989), p. 28.
30 Stepan (1982), pp. 3–4.
31 Miles (1989), p. 32
32 Benedict (1983), p. 19.
33 For example, up to the end of the eighteenth century discourses on Africa and Africans, which should properly be seen as racial discourses, represented the people as inferior but without seeing the differences as inherent, fixed and inevitable.
34

> Debates about classification centered upon the question of whether the environment might to some extent influence the creation and development of a race, or whether most of its characteristics were inherited. These are vital considerations, for such factors determine how deep and wide is the gap that separates different races; whether inherent and therefore permanent, or environmental and thus subject to change.
>
> (Mosse, 1978, p. 17)

35 Michael Banton ('Race as a social category', *Race,* Vol. 8, No. 1, 1966, p. 6) argues that the debate 'animated only the first phase of the great debate about race', and elsewhere, with Harwood, describes it as a 'false debate' (Banton and Harwood, 1975, p. 35). See also Stepan (1982), chapter 1; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York and London, 1981), pp. 39ff; **E.W.** Count, 'The evolution of the race idea in modern Western culture during the period of the pre-Darwinian 19th century', *Transactions of the New York Academy of Science,* Vol. viii, 1946, pp. 139–165. Siân Jones, notes that the debate was ended in the 1860s and 1870s by palaeontological evidence of the antiquity of humanity and the impact of Darwinian evolutionary theory (Jones ,1997, p. 42).

36 See John S. Haller, Jr, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859–1900* (Urbana, Illinois, and London, 1971), pp. 70ff.

37 See Stepan (1982), pp. 3–4, 29ff. Stepan claims that polygenism remained a minority strand in British racial thinking (p. 3).

38 See Haller (1971) for a fuller explanation; also see Banton (1966); Banton and Harwood (1975), p. 19.

39 See Benedict (1983), p. 20.

40 Haller (1971), p. 77. Similarly, Gould (1981, p. 73) talks of the 'shared racism' of monogenists and polygenists. It should be noted, though, that Banton and Harwood (1975, p. 19) suggest that theories of racial inferiority gained few converts in the late eighteenth century, presumably identifying the acceptance of these ideas as primarily a nineteenth-century phenomenon.

41 See Stepan (1982).

42 For a very useful discussion of early theories of difference, incorporating religious and environmental explanations, see Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Oxford, 1997), chapter 1.

43 Climate and environment have been seen as influencing the progress achieved by societies and as the major determinants of language, morality, skin complexion, sexual maturity, facial features and culture.

44 Banton, in Zubaida (1970), pp. 17–34. Elsewhere Banton offers another summary of where we should look for the origins of race:

> the principal source lay in the complex of ideas about the prehistory of the world and the origins of species, but it was influenced by the current state of very partial knowledge about peoples living outside Europe, by the contemporary feeling almost of intoxication about the rate of material progress in Europe and the context of racial contacts overseas in which most of the 'authorities' had made their observations of non-European peoples.

> (Banton, 1977, p. 54.)

45 Hannaford (1996), chapter 3.
46 *Ibid.,* p. 183.
47 If initially the measurements were imprecise and inconclusive, gradually the race concept came to be based, in the words of Nancy Stepan, 'on a wider set of data, more sophisticated measurements, and a deeper knowledge of biological processes and functions than previous work on human races' (Stepan, 1982, p. 46).
48 See Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford, 1997); see also Hannaford (1996).
49 Malik (1996), p. 84.
50 Barkan (1992), p. 15.
51 The terms 'anthropology' and 'ethnology' were often used synonymously in the nineteenth century, though ethnology more correctly applies to cultural as opposed to physical anthropology, the split taking place in the nineteenth century. Physical anthropology is concerned with bodily form and measurement, whereas cultural anthropology takes as its focus a comparative and developmental study of social man and his culture. See Haller (1971), chapter 4.
52 See MacDougall (1982), p. 119.
53 For an early investigation into the relationship between race, language and nation, see W.F. Edwards, *Des Caractère physiologiques des races humaines* (Paris, 1829).
54 'The work of philologists attracted the attention of cultural nationalists. They were quick to identify those who spoke languages with Aryan roots as people who also possessed a common biological origin. Language became a test of race' (MacDougall, 1982, p. 119). Reginald Horsman ('Origins of racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* Vol. 37, No. 3, 1976, pp. 387–410) looks at the philological researches into the Indo-European language family from which the German and English languages were descended. He adds, 'the effort to determine the origins of the Indo-European language assumed strong racial overtones. The fundamental error was the assumption that affinity of language proved affinity of race' (p. 392). There is a strong parallel here, to be explored more fully later, between the association of the Aryan language and ideas about the Aryan race and between the Romani language and the Romany race. It was a feature of many nineteenth-century writers on Gypsies that language was the key to identifying race and that purity of language was the best indicator of the racial purity of the speaker.
55 Mosse (1978), p. 17; see also Stepan (1982), p. 84, and chapter 4 for a fuller discussion.
56 See Stepan (1982), chapter 2. Stepan offers an admirably concise description of phrenology and its role in the development of race thinking:

> Phrenology was in essence innatist and typological, believing that human behaviour was the outcome of structures and functions of the mind that were fixed by heredity. From there it was not difficult to see human groups as differently endowed in the innate structures of the brain, and thereby destined for different roles in the history of human society.

(Stepan, 1982, p. 23). See also Gould (1981), chapter 3.

57 Malik (1996), p. 88. See also Horsman (1976), p. 398.
58 Nancy Stepan noted that 'for most of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century to be a race scientist meant to a large extent to be a measurer, a student of the skull' (Stepan, 1982, pp. xviii–Zxix). The reasons for this are clear: the skull housed the brain and the brain was the determinant of intelligence, ability, civilisation and morality.
59 Hannaford (1996), p. 262. The errors and inaccuracies in the methods and measurements of the craniologists meant that, by the 1880s, it was on the decline. See Gossett (1997), pp. 76–77.
60 See Gossett (1997), p. 79. Gossett also notes that '[e]ven body lice were at one time seriously considered as a possible index of race differences' (p. 81).
61 See Haller (1971), pp. 16–18.
62 Nancy Stepan adopts a strong and critical line on this where she writes that 'evidence, often sketchy and incomplete, was unconsciously manipulated to fit preconceived notions' (1982, p. x). She highlights the failure of science to remain objective and of the socially constructed nature of scientific knowledge and enquiry.
63 Mary Pratt *(Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation,* London, 1992) has said of Linnaeus' *The System of Nature:* 'Here was an extraordinary creation that would have a deep and lasting impact not just on travel and travel writing, but on the overall ways European citizenries made, and made sense of, their place on the planet' (p. 24). See chapter 2 of Pratt for a fuller discussion of Linnaeus and his work.
64 'In the first formal definition of human races in modern taxonomic terms, Linnaeus mixed character with anatomy' (Gould, 1981, p. 35).
65 Mosse (1978), p. 20.
66 Mosse (1978, p. 22) describes Camper as a pseudo-scientist and notes that his training was as an artist not as a scientist.
67 Mosse (1978), p. 23. See also P. Bowler, *Evolution: the History of an Idea* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 92–93; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power. The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), p. 167. Fryer looks at the work of some lesser known physicians, anatomists and men of science also working in the field of 'racial science' and contributing to the body of literature which provided the weight to ideas of racial difference.
68 George Mosse (1978, pp. 18–19) has said that Lamarck's concept of race 'stood within the Enlightenment, based upon reason and a critical mind that attempted to reject preconceived judgments'. See also Hannaford (1996), p. 256.
69 See Count (1946); Fryer (1984), pp. 166–167. Wim Willems notes that Blumenbach was a scholar at Göttingen at the same time as Heinrich Grellmann, author of the first major scholarly treatise on the Gypsies. Blumenbach also published a work on the skulls of Gypsies, probably one of the first scientific measurements conducted on the group. See Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London, 1997), p. 40.
70 Hannaford (1996, p. 256) has contrasted the views of Lamarck and Blumenbach, suggesting that the former contended that species were not fixed whereas

Blumenbach had suggested they were. The basis of this assessment, which seems to contradict the views of most other commentators, is not explained.

71 Horsman (1976), p. 396.

72 Hannaford (1996), p. 214; Hannaford then also offers his own qualification to the temptation to see Blumenbach, Buffon and Linnaeus as men who had broken entirely free from the intellectual constraints of the past. He writes:

> We should be equally careful not to assume that Montesquieu, Blumenbach, Buffon and Linnaeus had rid themselves of the physical and mental baggage of the Middle Ages or that their reflections on physiological or anatomical data necessarily anticipated a racial disposition.
> (Hannaford, 1996, p. 206)

73 Barkan (1992), p. 15.

74 See Mosse (1978), pp. 20–21.

75 See Banton and Harwood (1975), p. 27; also Banton (1977), pp. 32ff; Benedict (1983), p. 21; M. Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 44–46; Bowler (1989), pp. 88–89.

76 Banton (1977), p. 5; Gossett (1997), pp. 95–98.

77 Banton (1977), p. 5.

78 See Mosse (1978), p. 69.

79 See Banton (1966); also Banton and Harwood, who state that '[i]f the word "racism" is used in its original sense to refer to the doctrine that race determines the culture of peoples and the moral or intellectual qualities of individuals, Knox's lectures are the first book-length racist statements' (1975, p. 29).

80 Banton (1977), p. 52; see also Banton (1966); Mosse (1978), p. 70.

81 The two societies were eventually brought together in 1871 to form the Royal Anthropological Institute. This was largely due to the efforts of the Bristol physician John Beddoe (1826–1911).

82 Barkan (1992), p. 17.

83 Hannaford (1996), p. 257; Malik (1996), p. 89; Gossett (1997), p. 56; Banton (1987), pp. 38–40.

84 Hannaford (1996), p. 257.

85 Horsman (1976), p. 397.

86 Malik (1996), p. 89; Mosse (1978), chapter 5.

87 Stepan (1982), p. 43. Stepan argues that racial science after 1848 then became more conservative and the polygenist ideas of Richard Burton and James Hunt, founder of the Anthropological Society of London in 1863, came to dominate.

88 Banton and Harwood (1975), p. 25; Banton (1977), pp. 30ff.

89 Horsman (1976), p. 397. Again rather confusingly, Stepan suggests that Prichard did not believe in the idea of permanent and unchanging types.

90 For a discussion of the relationship between the race concept and the Enlightenment, see Mosse (1978). More recent texts which include useful discussions are Hannaford (1996) and Malik (1996). However, the most comprehensive monograph is by Eze (1997).

91 Eze (1997), p. 4.

92 Hannaford (1996), p. 55.

93 David Hume published his *Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations* in 1748.
94 Kant, the 'greatest race-theorist of his time', in his *On the Different Races of Men* (1775), divided humankind into four distinct types: Whites, Negro, Hunnic (Mongolian or Kalmuck), and Hindu or Hindustani. Each type was permanent and had its own natural disposition. See Count (1946), p. 143. See also Eze (1997), p. 5; Mosse (1978), p. 31; Hannaford (1996), p. 120.
95 Eze (1997), p. 5.
96 See R. Porter, *The Enlightenment* (London, 1990). For an excellent and broad-ranging study, see Thomas Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History 1721–1794* (London, 2000). See also John Sweetman, *The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution 1700–1850* (London, 1998); Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment: An Evaluation of its Assumptions, Attitudes and Values* (London, 1990).
97 Mosse (1978), p. 5.
98 Malik (1996), p. 46.
99 Ibid., p. 41.
100 European voyages to the Americas, Africa and Asia date back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries
101 See Curtin (1969, p. 48), who writes about the ways in which the missionary movement stressed the wickedness of pagan society and the abominable customs of the savages, forcing on the evangelicals what became known as the 'White Man's Burden', or the need to civilise and christianise. He adds: 'The missionaries' image of the non-European blended with the existing cultural arrogance and with the pseudo-scientific arguments for racial superiority.' See also Eze (1997); Barkan (1992), p. 15. See Mary Pratt (1992) for an excellent account of how travel books were an important means of bringing information about the rest of the world and their peoples to Europeans.
102 G. Watson, *The English Ideology: Studies in the Language of Victorian Politics* (London, 1973).
103 Bulmer and Solomos offer a middle position: 'racism was both a means of maintaining [European] dominance and a product of the dominance in reinforcing the European sense of superiority and control over their subject peoples' (Bulmer and Solomos (1999), p. 60).
104 Banton and Harwood (1975), p. 34.
105 Barkan (1992), p. 17.
106 See Mosse (1978, p. 34), who comments that the emergent eighteenth-century nationalism embraced the contemporary interest in history, origins and language and integrated this with the racial stereotypes to be found in the new sciences of anthropology, physiology and phrenology. See also J. Christie, *Race and Nation: A Reader* (London, 1998).
107 Horsman (1976), p. 392. The main writers forwarding notions of a separate Germanic race were Johan Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). For ideas of the English race, see the writings of Edmund Burke. See Hannaford (1996); Stepan (1982), pp. 98ff.
108 Mosse (1978), p. 94, and see also chapter 7.
109 '[W]ith the emergence of Romantic nationalism in the early nineteenth century, the idea that race and nation naturally coincided with one another and that the

state should represent a homogeneous racial-cum-national unit became widely accepted' (Jones (1997), p. 44).

110 Malik (1996), p. 75.

111 See Mosse (1978), chapter 3. Mosse notes that 'Herder's emphasis upon language as the expression of a shared past was common to a whole generation of philologists by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries' (p. 39). For a brief discussion of Herder, see Malik (1996), pp. 78–79. Christie also talks of the 'potent link' betwen language, history and culture, and of the way that language came to be seen and understood as the expression of the innate characteristics of a people (1998, pp. 37–38). See also Miles (1989), p. 114; Barzun (1965), p. 135; Mosse (1978), pp. 38–41; N. Hudson, 'From "nation" to "race": the origin of racial classification in eighteenth-century thought', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* Vol. 29, No. 3, 1996, pp. 247–264.

112 Banton (1977), p. 13.

113 Malik (1996), pp. 70, 91.

114 See S. Fenton, *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 83. Tim Youngs, using the idea of 'white apes', notes that the language of race was applied not only to groups with a different coloured skin but 'it was also used to denote class and gender differences within "civilised" societies'. Tim Youngs, 'White apes at the fin de siècle', in Tim Youngs (ed.), *Writing and Race* (London, 1997), pp. 166–190. See also L. Back and J. Solomos (eds), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (London, 2000), p. 14.

115 See Harrison, 'The tender frame'; Stepan (1982); Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1986); Christine Bolt, 'Race and the Victorians', in C. Eldridge (ed.), *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke and London, 1984), pp. 126–148; Michael Biddiss, 'Racial ideas and the politics of prejudice 1850–1914', *Historical Journal,* Vol. xv, No. 3, 1972, pp. 570–582; Wolfgang Mock, 'The function of race in imperialist ideologies: the example of Joseph Chamberlain', in P. Kennedy and A. Nicholls (eds), *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (London, 1981); G. Watson, 'Race and empire', in his *The English Ideology* (1973); Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971); Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1978); Richard Soloway, 'Counting the degenerates: the statistics of race deterioration in Edwardian England', *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 17, 1982.

116 Malik (1996), pp. 116–117.

117 M. Biddiss also makes the connection between the spread of the ideas and nationalism:

> It did not matter greatly that relatively few writers elaborated fully systematised racial interpretations of the past, present and future. In terms of repercussions, much would come from rather less. The language of racial thinking, the idiom of eugenic engineering, the jargon of the calliper, all penetrated to a wider public. There they mingled, sometimes indistinguishably, with the no less pervasive rhetoric of belligerent nationalistic identification and assertion.

> (M. Biddiss, 'Myths of the blood: European racist ideology, 1850–1945', *Patterns of Prejudice,* Vol. ix, No. 5, 1975, p. 14)
>
> See also Horsman (1976), pp. 398–399.

118 Haller (1971), p. 17.

119 Henry Mayhew, writing of outcast London, applied the race concept to social and not merely colour distinctions. This can also be seen in the Rougon-Macquart novels of Zola, where he talks of physical characteristics as determining mental or moral attributes. See Malik (1996), p. 106.

120 'These [anthropological] societies testified to – and provided the locus for – the growing interest in the scientific study of race, which re-inforced notions of the hierarchy, antiquity, and immutability of human races' (Barkan, 1992, p. 17)

121 Biddiss ('Myths of the blood', p. 14) argues that although Darwin's ideas questioned the whole notion of the permanence of racial types, his ideas of natural selection were pressed into the services of racism: 'Essentially the ethos of social Darwinism encouraged shifts of detail in racist argumentation, rather than any fundamental revision in the basic mode of thought.' Stepan identifies the fundamental basis of eugenicist thought as resting on the belief that 'the differences in mental, moral and physical traits between individuals and races were hereditary'. See Stepan (1982), p. 113 and chapter 5. Stepan also comments:

> By as early as the late 1860s, scientists embracing evolution found that, despite the novelty of Darwin's anti-creationism, evolutionary thought was compatible with the idea of fixity, antiquity, and hierarchy of human races. Far from dislodging old racial ideas, evolution strengthened them, and provided them with a new scientific vocabulary of struggle and survival.
>
> (Stepan, 1982, pp. 48–49.)
>
> See also Malik (1996), pp. 112ff; Gossett (1997), chapter 7; Jones (1997), pp. 43ff; D. MacKenzie, 'Eugenics in Britain', *Social Studies of Science,* Vol. 6, 1976, pp. 499–532; Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction between Biological and Social Theory* (Brighton, 1980); Paul Rich, 'The long Victorian sunset: anthropology, eugenics and race in Britain c. 1900–1948', *Patterns of Prejudice,* Vol. 18, No. 3, 1984, pp. 3–17.

122 See also the review by Michael Biddiss, 'Toward a history of European Racism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 4, 1979, pp. 508–513.

123 See Bolt (1971) and Lorimer (1978); for a critical review of Bolt, see M. Biddiss, 'Racial ideas and the politics of prejudice 1850–1914', *Historical Journal,* Vol. xv, No. 3, 1972, pp. 570–582.

124 Barkan (1992), p. 2.

125 The timing of the 'hardening' varies from one commentator to the next. Mark Harrison dates this process from the 1810s and 1820s, when doubts began to be expressed about the ability of Europeans to acclimatise to, and so settle in, India. See Harrison, 'The tender frame'. Other commentators, such as Christine Bolt and Douglas Lorimer, take a later mid-century date. See Banton (1977), p. 63.

126 Biddiss, 'Myths of the blood', pp. 11–12. Similar arguments can be found in the work of MacDougall (1982), Malik (1996) and Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science* (London, 1995). Kohn writes: 'History came to be understood as the history of racial struggle; anthropology, the science of man, was primarily the science of racial variation. Even class relationships were readily understood as racial ones' (p. 30); MacDougall notes also how widespread was the view of race as 'the principal determinant of personal character and social progress' (p. 91); and Malik has said that race was used to explain everything

> from the cause of criminality to the nature of Britain's special destiny, from the origins of 'savage' people in Africa and Asia to the temper of class relations in Europe. Race explained the character of individuals, the structure of social communities and the fate of human societies.
> (Malik, 1996, p. 1.)

127 'Throughout the 1970s there has been a flow of information from academic production to the lay public, which has helped to sustain race rather than ethnicity as the unit of debate.' (Husband, 1982, p. 16). In particular, Husband is referring here to the work of Eysenck, Richardson and Spears and the sciences of neo-biologism and sociobiology. Kohn (1995) looks at the continued presence of race in scientific discourse, political rhetoric and popular ideas. He argues that science has many voices and that the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) voice, affirming the biological meaninglessness of race, is just one of them.

128 See Gould (1981) on Eysenck and Burt; and Michael Banton, *Racial Theories* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 113.

129 Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (London, 1998), p. 23.

130 Hannaford (1996), p. 6.

131 Husband (1982), p. 19. See also Malik (1996), p. 6; R. Miles (1989), p. 71; Banton (1998), chapter 7; Cornell and Hartmann (1998), p. 23.

132 See Gossett (1997), pp. 82–83.

5
Constructing the true Romany
Gypsy racial identity from the late eighteenth to the twentieth centuries

The idea that the Gypsies formed a separate race embodies all the features of race thinking which were developed during the course of the nineteenth century. Although not always explicit, behind every description of the 'real' Romany and the 'true' Gypsy lay a belief in the notion of blood purity, the importance and permanence of acquired characteristics, and the primary significance of physical difference. Emphasis is given to the distinctiveness and peculiarity of the Gypsy people, readily identifiable from non-Gypsies by rigid, visible and clearly defined boundaries. Their separate racial identity was constructed around notions of foreign origin and distinct language, cultural and behavioural differences, their mode of earning a living and, lastly, but perhaps most centrally to the race concept, a belief in physiological distinctiveness.

The racial picture was often presented as a composite whole, most notably in the writings of the Gypsy lorists and other 'specialist' writers on Gypsies, from the late eighteenth through to the twentieth centuries. Heinrich Grellmann, the early evangelists, George Borrow and the Gypsy lorists have undoubtedly contributed in a major way to the widespread acceptance of the idea of the Romany Gypsy race. However, the racial strand in Gypsy studies was not merely confined either to the nineteenth century or to the works of the Gypsy lorists. Rather, it has achieved a wider and longer influence, touching the works of many who have specialised in the field of Gypsy studies and who, notably, relied heavily on the first generation of Gypsy scholars for their data, approach and analysis.

Yet even when including these other works, the field of Gypsy studies remains the tip of a very much larger iceberg, and while these works are well known and essential to any who work in this field of study, it is doubtful whether the wider public have any direct knowledge of this group of people and their writings. The popular perception of Gypsies is taken from a much wider variety of sources, from language and labels through to plays and poems, fiction and fine art, cartoons and song. Influential images even find their way into the world of high fashion. The romantic vision of the alluring, fiery and hot-blooded Gypsy inspired the spring/summer collection of the British fashion designer Clements Ribeiro launched in July 1997 The collection was widely reported in the news paper and magazine media, with appropriate images and text which

reaffirmed the traditional and racial representation of the group.[1] Our conception and image of the Gypsy are given shape and substance by short articles in popular magazines and newspapers, and by casual references to the group in items dealing primarily with other issues such as dress, fashion and music. This means that the anecdotal descriptions, passing references and images produced by people with a superficial knowledge of Gypsies take on as much significance in forming and reinforcing popular opinion as full-length monographs written by people who have engaged in serious, scholarly study of the group.

Within these many cultural forms the racial Gypsy has had a regular and lasting presence, making this image pervasive and, by its constant repetition, persuasive. It is not necessary for all the racial components to be present for the racial picture to be affirmed. For example, the mere use of the language of 'pure-bred' and 'real Romany', of the Gypsies as separate and strange people, and emphasis on physical difference and their unchanging 'essential' nature repeat the main criteria which distinguish the race concept from other systems of classification. They carry with them the assumptions and ideas of the larger picture without having to cover every aspect of Gypsy racial identity. Other themes normally associated with the racial perspective which regularly appear focus on fortune telling, the rural dimension, and the idea of the exotic, strange and mysterious. It is in these less obvious, or less complete, ways that the racial Gypsy is continually perpetuated. These images have proved to have a constant appeal to cultural providers of all types and also, importantly, to an audience receptive to stories of exotic and illicit love, mystery, promises of the future, and romantic and rural escapes from the realities of everyday life. The notion of the racial Gypsy may have been born in the late eighteenth century, and nurtured through specialist texts, but it lives on, and arguably continues to thrive, 200 years later, nourished in the full range of cultural discourse.

'A strange and singular race'

Origins and language

Central to the racial definition of the group is the conviction that all Gypsies, dispersed at all points throughout the world, were originally from a single stock. By identifying one origin for the Gypsies it then became possible to establish a coherent identity for all those people said to be able to claim ancestry back to this one source.

The importance of origin in establishing the nature of Gypsy identity is indicated by the prominent position it is given in key and influential texts on the group. It is often the first theme mentioned in encyclopaedia entries, and many texts by prominent authors on Gypsies have separate and early chapters dealing with precisely this issue. Indeed, a fascination with the origins of the Gypsies extended beyond the narrow field of Gypsy experts or specialists.[2] On 5

December 1829 and 2 January 1830, John Staples Harriot, a Colonel in the Bengal Infantry, delivered a lecture on Gypsy origins to the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Although he has been described by one commentator as 'one of the fathers of Gypsy lore', he did not subsequently develop this interest and his name is largely forgotten among Gypsiologists.[3] It is among the latter that the issue has been most fully explored.[4] Dora Esther Yates, a prominent and respected member of the Gypsy Lore Society, made an early reference to origins in a lecture on Gypsies:

> Who are the Gypsies and whence come they is a question which has troubled the world of learning for many centuries, and one to which – despite some 3000 books on the subject in a dozen languages – there is even yet no exact answer. The Gypsies themselves are frankly ignorant of their origin…. So first the historians, then the philologists and last the anthropologists put their heads together and joined in the game of seeking the origin of this landless and alien race in their midst.
>
> And many were the strange theories propounded.[5]

Despite the hyperbole concerning its interest to the scholarly community and a tendency to exaggerate the number of books on the subject,[6] Yates nevertheless makes the interesting and highly relevant point that the prehistory and origins of the group were unknown to, and of little interest to, the existing Gypsy community. The attempt to establish origins and deduce identity from this was something undertaken by outsiders. Also, as she mentions, there have been many theories about the Gypsies' origins. Robert Macfie commented in an article in the *University Review* that '[t]hey have been identified with the descendants of Cain, the Sigynnae of Herodotus, refugees from the cities of the Plain, priests of Isis, Tartars, Chaldeans, Sudras, German Jews, and Druids'.[7] While these claims were based entirely on supposition and fantasy, the theory of Egyptian origins, which remained the most commonly held view up to the end of the eighteenth century, had a slightly more substantial basis. The label Egyptian was commonly applied to the group throughout Europe in the early modern period and is thought to have derived from the group itself, who exploited the mystical, magical and exotic impressions associated with Egypt to their own advantage.[8]

The notion of Egyptian origins was given credibility by the work of Blumenbach, discussed in the previous chapter, who discovered similarities between Gypsy skulls and those of ancient Egyptians.[9] One of the last writers to hold to this version of the Gypsies' origins was the highly idiosyncratic Samuel Roberts of Sheffield. An advocate of anti-slavery, a self-styled 'paupers' advocate', champion of boy chimney sweeps and critic of child labour, the devoutly religious Roberts believed Gypsies to be the descendants of the ancient Egyptians.[10] His 'evidence' rested less on the scientific findings of Blumenbach and more on Biblical prophecies to be found in Ezekiel: 'I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and will disperse them through the countries.'[11]

However, this theory was abandoned by around the 1820s and 1830s by the vast majority of other commentators, who replaced Egypt with India as the Gypsies' place of origin.

Not content with establishing Indian origins, some commentators then took the enquiry to the next stage in their attempt to discover the particular region of India and the particular Indian tribe or caste from which the Gypsies originated, such as the Suders or Pariahs or the primitive tribes of the Hindustan expelled, or who freely emigrated, in the fourteenth century.[12] Initially Charles Godfrey Leland thought that 'irrefutable proof' of origins was to be found in the physical resemblance between the Gypsies the world over and the natives of India, but he later refined his argument and located Gypsy origins with the group known as Jats, a North Indian tribe expelled in the course of the religious wars that swept India between the tenth and twelfth centuries.[13]

The claims for Indian ancestry did not, then, initially stem from the Gypsies themselves, even though many did come to accept this explanation of their past and history. Rather, the theory of Indian origins dates from the eighteenth century and emerged primarily from the philologists and others who noticed an alleged similarity between the Gypsies' language, Romany, and Sanskrit. As noted by R.A. Scott Macfie in his 1927 lecture to the Hawes Literary Society, 'the philologists hoped to wrest from the language a solution of the baffling riddle of Gypsy origin'.[14] This belief was in spirit with the times and, as noted by Thomas Gossett in his history of the race concept,

> Since languages were known to have a long history, so the theory ran, perhaps it would be possible by philological comparison to determine basic racial affinities among peoples.[15]

The first stage in this process was to establish that Gypsies did indeed have their own separate language, Romani, described in one account as 'the orchid of the philological garden'.[16] Second, it was necessary to show that this language was derived from Sanskrit, thus proving the Indian origins of the group.

Although the attempt to identify a distinct Gypsy language has a long ancestry, it was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that linguistic study really flourished, with investigation into the Romani language forming its own distinctive area:

> The opportunity of studying an oriental language in Europe from the living document attracted not only romantic amateurs but even the greatest scholars of the last [i.e. nineteenth] century.[17]

Jacob Carl Rüdiger, in 1777, was one of the earliest scholars to identify connections between Romani and 'the tongues of India'.[18] Rüdiger was followed internationally by such scholars of the Romani language as Jacob Bryant, Dr Alexandros Georgios Paspati of Constantinople, Professor August Friedrich Pott,

Professor de Goeje of Leiden University, Paul Bataillard, and Franz Ritter Xavier von Miklosich of the University of Vienna.[19] In particular, Pott's efforts between 1844–1885 in assembling and analysing the collections of his predecessors are generally seen as an invaluable contribution to the debate about origins, now identified as north India, and his *Die Zigeuner in Europa und Asien* has been described as a 'trail-blazer'.[20] In Britain, the study of the Romany language had long excited the interests of a diverse body of scholars and writers. However, it was not until the more scientific enquiries of the latter part of the eighteenth century that philological enquiry, and the attempt to connect Romani with Sanskrit, took on a more serious dimension extending beyond the glossary or vocabulary lists of previous endeavours. Grellmann's treatise on the Gypsies, and in particular the substantial section on language and origins, was to have a significant impact on the study of Romani and, despite reservations about his scholarly practices, his influence on subsequent writing on this theme can be seen in many later studies of Gypsies, including those by many of the early nineteenth-century evangelical writers and also, significantly, in the works of George Borrow.[21]

By the time of the later nineteenth-century Gypsy lorists, notably including John Sampson (1862–1931), who devoted a lifetime to the study of the Gypsy language, the theory of Indian origins and the Sanskrit roots of the Romani language were accepted as incontestable truths.[22] A major part of their argument that language provided the key to origins rested on a comparison of words, with similarities in spelling, pronunciation and meaning, offering the required evidence.[23] A rather more sophisticated analysis considered it necessary to go beyond mere similarities in words to look also at grammatical structures and the conventions of a language.[24] But whatever the method the conclusion remained consistent. In their study of the dialect of the English Gypsies, Bath Smart and Henry Crofton remarked that the link between Romani and Sanskrit 'has long ago been ascertained', though they held back from making any specific connection with any particular Indian dialect.[25] By the 1920s Gypsiologists had generally accepted that the relationship between the language spoken by the Gypsies and that of the Jats tribe in India was so close that there could be no doubt that its roots lay in the dialect spoken in the north of India, confirming the claim to parenthood with Sanskrit.[26]

The attempts to discover the Sanskrit roots of the Romani language, and so the Indian origins of the Gypsy people, should not be seen in isolation. Rather, this should be understood as part of, first, the development of comparative philology which swept across Europe in the nineteenth century and the discovery that the languages of India and Europe shared a common origin, and a more general vogue for Orientalism.[27] The parallel developments of the race concept and comparative philology were not merely coincidental, and the assumption among most of the early nineteenth-century philologists was that there was some fundamental correlation between language and race.[28] Certainly the connection between the Romani language and a belief that Gypsies constituted a separate

racial group is apparent in most of the nineteenth-century writings on the topic. Second, and more particularly, it was both a product of and a contribution to a much wider European venture which sought to identify the common Aryan origins of all Indo-European languages and cultures. There was an intellectual vogue in the nineteenth century for tracing the Indian roots of peoples, languages and cultures, and although this was especially marked in the Germanic states this also spread to Britain. Indeed, it has been commented that this endeavour 'provided the intellectual backbone for the English collectors and romancers',[29] and there developed in the mid-nineteenth century a particular school of comparative folklore and mythology which drew much of its strength from the philological enquiries into the Indian languages. A key founder of comparative philology was the Berliner Franz Bopp, though in England the argument that all Indo-European peoples belonged to a common Aryan stock was developed by Friedrich Max Müller, Professor of Oriental Languages at Oxford University.[30] In folklorist circles the interest in the heritage of ancient India and diffusionist theories is seen by Dorson, historian of the folklore movement in Britain, as a 'temporary obsession', with the ethnological strand eventually triumphing over comparative mythology.[31] But while folklorists in general may have abandoned their obsession with India this was not true of the Gypsy lorists, and the importance of establishing and confirming the Gypsies' Indian roots remained a cornerstone of Gypsy identity.

The absence of reliable historical records indicating the Gypsies' wanderings prior to their appearance in the West has been a major cause of concern to Gypsiologists. With the emergence of comparative philology came a welcome new opportunity to investigate various aspects of the Gypsies' remote past. Linguistic analysis was used, first, to identify the timing and route of migrations from the Indian homeland, the Gypsy diaspora. The extent of the purity or corruption of the language was an indication of how long the group remained in a particular area or country.[32] This was extended further in order to establish some indication of the degree of contact and assimilation with the indigenous populations, with a correlation being suggested between the intermixing of words/language and of people. Further, it was also suggested that the purity or decay of the language provided an indication of the extent of persecution suffered by the Gypsies on their travels and also of the purity or decay of the race as a result of intermixing, intermarriage and assimilation. When persecuted the Gypsies needed their secret language to survive and so the language remained pure, and when humanely treated the need for secret modes of communication was much less and the language began to decay. The idea of a secret language even extended to the non-verbal system of communication, known as *patrin,* of Gypsies leaving sticks and other roadside symbols for others of their kind. Notions of racial purity also found their way into the study of language, with the true, pure-bred Gypsy also being the speaker of the purest form of the Romany language. Finally, as well as a study of Romani being used to show origins,

migrations and assimilation, the spirit, words and lyricism of the language were also thought to reveal the essence and temperament of the people who used it.

Philological enquiry into the Romani language was thus put to many uses. The proposition that language can provide a solution to origins and migrations, of any group and not just the Gypsies, is attractive and not without some credibility. Indeed, this is a key component of much linguistic research and analysis. However, while this has reached a highly sophisticated level in the twentieth century, the same was not true of the nineteenth. Indeed many of the earlier studies, even taking into account their pioneering adventurousness, were tainted by a weak methodology and a desire to extend the study of language into a much wider history and commentary on the people. As noted by the Spanish Gypsiologist Antonio Gomez Alfaro:

> The romantic 'discovery' of the Gitano in the following [nineteenth] century was accompanied by an efflorescence of studies in which linguistic research enjoyed pride of place, although the intellectual level of many of those involved does not render their work particularly reliable.[33]

Many of the early vocabularies or glossaries of Gypsy words were compiled by outsiders to the group and were, at the very least, of questionable accuracy. Perhaps the best indication of the inaccuracy and dubious worth of many of the Romani glossaries is provided by the lorists themselves. Part of their criticism, from which they naturally exempted themselves, concerned the unscientific method of collecting words, usually oral and without the use of notebooks (for fear of offending or intimidating the Gypsy source). For example, the Romani vocabulary produced by Joseph Lucas has been described as erratic in spelling, based on false derivations, and as having 'more philological absurdities than any other book of its size'.[34] In the characteristic manner of much of Gypsy studies, the words obtained in this and similar ways were then often repeated across a range of sources, giving apparent validity to the original enquiry. In his study of the Gypsies Konrad Bercovici, himself an advocate of the theory of Indian origins and of the closeness of Romani to the language of the North Indian Jat tribe, warned of the dangers:

> Philological gymnastics of philologists with preconceived ideas, who turn words around, and replace syllables and vowels to demonstrate that such and such a word is of Sanskrit, Hebraic, or Arabic origin, do not teach anything.[35]

The key issue, then, is not whether or not a distinct Romany language exists; nor whether it has Sanskrit or Indian roots, but it is rather how philological enquiry has been used to inform group identity. In relation to the emergence and development of the racial definition of Gypsies, the study of the Romany language became a key element of the attempt to prove their existence as a separate racial group.

However, the strong desire to establish a preconceived view of Gypsy identity meant that many of the early studies into the language became distorted in the way described by Bercovici. In relation to the attempt to link language with origins and migrations, all that can be said conclusively is that the evidence is inconclusive, and that we should talk in terms of probabilities and possibilities rather than certainties.

In order to further build on and consolidate the picture of the Gypsies as a distinct race emphasis was also given to their separate physical type, customs, manners, behaviour and modes of thought. In many instances these differences from non-Gypsies were, as with their language, traced back to their Indian roots.

An article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* spoke not only of 'Hindostan' origins but also of similarities between 'Hindostani' peoples and present-day Gypsies in terms of appearance and customs which were said to correspond closely to the superstitions of 'Hindooism'.[36] More romantically Charles Leland wrote that the Gypsies 'keep among themselves the most singular fragments of their Oriental origin; they abound in quaint characteristics'.[37]

'[D]ark in varying shades': physical difference[38]

The attempt to build an image of a physiologically distinct Gypsy people covers virtually every aspect of visible physical features. The most frequently mentioned characteristics of olive or tawny-coloured flesh, black hair, dark eyes (containing a 'sullen mystery' or 'piercing lustre') have evident Indian parallels.[39] However, the desire to physically separate the Gypsies from non-Gypsies also resulted in emphasis being given to other physical qualities such as their keenness or brilliance of eye, long eyelashes, sallow cheeks, thin curled lips, brilliant white teeth, wiry figures and their lithe and graceful form. S.B. James wrote in 1874 that this 'distinctively historical race' were characterised by 'their very beautiful women, raven black hair and gleaming eyes'; Robert Macfie was able to identify a man and boy he encountered as Gypsies thus: 'both had the true Gypsy cut, and were of medium size, lithe and agile in appearance, with the peculiar loose walk, dark skins and piercing black eyes'; and in an article that played on both their childlike and mysterious nature emphasis was given to 'the keen, searching, filmy eye; the tawny, swarthy skin; the sensitive hand, with its long taper fingers; the lithe, lissom figure'.[40]

This unscientific emphasis on such visible physical differences was complemented within the scholarly community by a more rigorous endeavour at comparative anatomy based on measurement. In this respect the work of Dr Eugene Pittard, Professor of Anthropology at Geneva, gave apparent academic and objective substance to the more populist and impressionistic writings of other commentators.[41] It was said that anthropological measurements of heads proved that the Gypsies, the Sudras and the Jats were of the same origins, and theirs were different from the heads of the Hindus and the other three castes of India.[42]

Robert Macfie, the noted Gypsy lorist, has provided one of the fullest statements concerning the physical distinctiveness of the Gypsies in an account that combined the objective physical measurements of Eugene Pittard with the more generalised impressions of visible physical traits, and was then further extended with his own subjective assessment of their various qualities. The tone is one of describing a laboratory specimen, although the instinctive attraction of the people, especially the women, is also apparent:

> The race is slightly dolichocephalic, or long-headed, and the average height is 5 feet 4.9 inches. Their limbs are wiry, their movements vivacious, and their hands and feet small. Their features are regular, and in youth often extremely beautiful, though the mouth is not small; the teeth are good and white, and the nose straight with a tendency to be hooked. They are deeply pigmented, the skin of pure Gypsies being olive or even darker, and the hair straight and black with the peculiar blackness which is described as blue-black. The iris is dark, especially among the women, and the eyes have a lustre which everybody notices but nobody has yet succeeded in describing.[43]

Often a gender distinction was also made, adding a further refinement to the general picture, with the men described as being of middle stature, well-made, muscular, swarthy, upright, full-chested and with marked profiles and a quick and firm pace. Gypsy women were said to have arched nostrils, prominent septa, glossy tresses, tawny, well-formed shoulders, Grecian-type noses and dark piercing eyes.[44]

The distinctive physiognomy of the Gypsies was accentuated by their distinctive style of dress. Women were said to have a love of finery and personal adornment and to prefer gay colours, such as red and yellow kerchiefs, itself taken as an indication of a persistent Oriental tradition.[45] The style of dress was said to be showy and colourful, with headscarves, trinkets and large earrings as much-favoured accessories.[46] The men were less colourful but no less distinctive in their slouching hats, velveteen coats covered in silver buttons and corduroy trousers.

'Their ancient manners [and] customs'[47]

As well as being physically and visibly distinctive, Gypsies were also thought to be markedly different from non-Gypsies by virtue of their separate culture and customs, unchanged over centuries and incorporating not only the Romani language but a wide range of rituals, taboos and ceremonies relating to courtship, marriage, divorce, death and pollution. They also engaged in distinctive practices and behaviour in relation to dress, diet, music, employment and nomadism. They were believed to have their own stock of folktales and traditional beliefs and to be guided in their life by a range of superstitions.[48] Indeed, it was Charles

Leland's belief that Gypsy life was dominated by ritual and ceremony, and his book *Gypsy Sorcery* was primarily a collection of 'the customs, usages and ceremonies current among gypsies, as regards fortune-telling, witch-doctoring, love-philtering, and other sorcery'.[49] Attempts were often made to trace these cultural forms back to their Indian roots. For example, the noted lorist Francis Groome suggested that the Gypsies, on leaving India, took with them not only hundreds of Indian words and a language but also scores of folk-tales which they then disseminated about the world.[50]

The image of the true, racially pure Gypsy was further strengthened with the evidence showing that the group adhered to a series of taboos, rites, ceremonies and beliefs:[51]

> All cultural factors were taken into consideration and covered, among others, death and marriage, taboos concerning women and superstitious portents which determined when they could travel.[52]

Marriage was said to be formalised by jumping over or crossing broomsticks,[53] and divorce involved a display of nudity and the sacrifice of a horse.[54] Traditions associated with death included the burning of the property of the deceased, the relinquishing of some habit of the dead person by the remaining members of the family, the pouring of ale over the grave, and the burying of some keepsake with the corpse.[55] But it was the taboo system that seemed to excite the most curiosity and attention. The *mokadi* regulations relate to issues around female sexuality and notions of contamination, and also to a series of codes concerning notions of uncleanness in relation to diet, the use of eating utensils and the washing of clothes:

> Anything associated with femininity, whether food preparation, clothing, long hair or menstruation, were all included in the codes of behaviour. These determined what women could touch, where they could sit and what they could do. If a menstruating woman crossed a stream then the water was immediately contaminated and the family would have to move camp. Childbirth was singled out for exceptional treatment with the woman being physically ostracised from the family and the main body of the camp.[56]

The codes governing washing and eating were no less strict. Food was seen as contaminated if prepared or touched by a menstruating woman, if the dish had been touched by an animal or if the food dish had been washed in a bowl usually reserved for clothes. Codes and regulations, superstitions and beliefs, established by tradition and enforced formally by Gypsy councils and informally by social pressure, were seen as dominating just about every aspect of the day-to-day life of the Gypsies: 'They seemed unable to eat, sleep, travel, wash, drink or give birth without first consulting some omen or belief.'[57]

The picture of the racial Gypsy would not have been complete without some reference to 'typical' Gypsy employments. These were not only those trades in

which Gypsies were usually employed but those for which they were racially suited as a result of a particular physical attribute or an inherited attitude of mind. Their temperament, nature and way of life were said to make them disinclined to settled employments and to being employed by others, and their fierce independence meant they could accept no master. Their way of life, character and temperament meant they were ideally suited to bartering and horse-dealing. They were thought to trade on their dark skins and mystical origins in order to exploit the susceptibilities of the settled population by telling their fortunes. All the economic activities in which the Gypsies engaged were presented, in one way or another, as an expression of their distinctive racial quality and character. One of the clearest examples of this concerns their involvement in various aspects of the entertainment business, most usually as dancers or musicians. This was a profession to which the Gypsies were said to be naturally inclined, and an inherited musical and dancing ability was presented as an essential aspect of their life and being.

The association of Gypsies with musical and dancing proficiency and prowess has a very long ancestry, and probably dates from the sixteenth century and their activities as court entertainers, if not before. Much attention was paid in the Gypsy lorist literature to the widely renowned Hungarian musicians, playing a particular style of Gypsy music, and the Russian and Spanish dancers. Every effort was made by the lorists to locate the English Gypsies within this tradition, thereby establishing their credentials as part of the wider Gypsy race. In the pages of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* it is possible to find references to the dancing booths of the Gray and Shaw families in East Anglia, numerous Gypsy fiddlers, with the fiddle being seen as the 'distinctive Romany instrument', Welsh Gypsy harpists, and to individuals such as John Allan, a piper from Northumberland.[58] However, it is not so much the fact of Gypsy musicianship that is of concern here as the way in which this was presented as something natural and inborn to the group, and the idea that the inherited character of the people – wild, colourful, rhythmic, impetuous and spontaneous – was revealed in their playing.

There are many contemporary instances of the association between Gypsies and musicianship and the label 'Gypsy' is often used to convey authenticity to the music being played, suggesting a romantic bohemianism, and to indicate the inherited and instinctive versatility and ability of the player. Caravanserai are described as playing East European Gypsy music and Louis Stewart is advertised as a Gypsy jazz guitar veteran, following in the footsteps of one of the most famous Gypsy musicians, Django Reinhardt. Similar examples, both historical and contemporary, could be multiplied many times over, and while this labelling of players by their origin, ancestry or colour is not limited to the Gypsies, it is the case that it is more marked with this group than with any other, representing the continuation of a long tradition in the representation of the group.

Many of the racial representations of the group also incorporated a statement on the Gypsies' social and political organisation, claiming that Gypsies remained

outside the dominant social and political institutions, favouring instead their own internal systems of organisation and rule. Images were given of dark, mysterious meetings, inevitably held in secluded places, often at night, calling to mind a clan or tribe system in which the elders or chiefs were referred to as kings and queens. Having developed an image of the Gypsies as the dark-eyed, swarthy children from the Far East, A.W. Jarvis and R. Turtle, in a 1907 article in *The Idler,* claimed that the Gypsies had their own laws, different from those of the countries in which they lived, which bound them together as a race and which 'separate them from ordinary national hopes, aspirations and conduct, by great thick walls of unsympathetic, adamant hardness'.[59] The unwritten laws were administered by the Gypsy court, or Kris, which expressed 'the collective will of the Rom',[60] adjudicated disputes and passed judgement on those who transgressed the laws of the group. Rarely, though, was any indication given of the nature, content and application of these laws other than a few examples of how an individual might be fined or subjected to some humiliation or, in the most extreme cases, be cast out of the group altogether. In one account the punishment for unfaithful women was said to consist of either burying them alive or having them run naked around a field![61]

Finally, alongside differences in origin, language, culture and physical type, the Gypsy race were also said to possess extraordinary differences in their nature, manner of thought, ambitions and attitudes to life, which served to separate them from the people among whom they lived.[62] Gypsies were frequently described as possessing a number of behavioural traits and qualities which were common to all Gypsies and which had remained the same over time. Essentially commentators were seeking to identify the qualities that defined the Gypsy, and so capture the true 'essence' of the people. While the components of the essence were likely to vary in the points of detail from one writer to the next, they all shared the common objective of revealing the true Gypsy spirit.

Much of the literature on the Gypsies makes reference to their childlike nature, their 'play spirit', innocence, naïveté, and to a life full of joy and adventure. They are described as a people who never grow up, always remaining, mentally, morally and emotionally, as children.[63] The following extract, echoing many nineteenth-century representations of Africans and black-skinned people, is typical:

> They are untruthful, but their untruthfulness is simply the unfettered imagination of children. They are irreligious, just as children are irreligious…. They are sensitive as children. Cruelty in any form is repugnant to them.[64]

They were also described as easily excited, imaginative, moody, secretive, restless, chaste, abstemious,[65] quiet, patient, sober, fiery,[66] violently passionate, very jealous, capable of cruel vindictiveness, courteous, generous,[67] haughty, proud, exclusive,[68] witty, hot-tempered, unmalicious, pleasant and polite,[69]

dignified, healthy, resourceful and adaptable,[70] and as sharp, shrewd and mysterious.[71] Elsewhere we find mention of their restless thoughts, of an inability to concentrate or to work patiently towards a distant goal, and of actions determined by the inspiration of the moment.[72] John Tilford, writing in 1946, provided a Borrow-influenced account of the real nature of the Gypsy:

> his oblique morality, his scorn for gorgio values, his earthly wisdom, his quick and scheming mind, his humorous roguishness, his loyalty to his blood companions, and, above all, his incorrigible Gypsiness.[73]

In all the accounts, irrespective of the contradictions and inconsistencies, the intention was to create a picture of a very distinctive personality which set the Gypsies apart in their behaviour and outlook from all others: a truly strange and singular people. Dora Yates identifies the Gypsies' dominant behavioural characteristics as 'pride and love of race, passionate devotion to their children...natural dignity and oriental hospitality, and inherent love of nature and – above all – a love of freedom'.[74] In a single sentence Yates has managed to convey most of the key aspects of the racial definition by her references to their Eastern origins, unchanging nature, inherited characteristics and natural way of life.

The love of freedom, noted by Yates, was seen to be most obviously expressed through the Gypsies' wanderlust.[75] In fact, nomadism became an essential part of the Gypsy identity: it was an inherited instinct and not something that could be controlled or denied.[76] Indeed, it was argued that their passion for wandering was more deeply rooted than it was in the Bedouin, and that the inability to settle was the product of an indomitable and innate impulse that ruled their whole life.[77] The inherited nomadic trait separated them not only from the rest of the settled population but also from other indigenous wanderers who took to nomadism for progmatic reasons, such as vagrants, showmen and pedlars. To try and prevent Gypsies from travelling, and to incarcerate them within four walls, was thought to be a denial of their very nature and essence. Gypsies in houses were likened to birds in cages, with the walls and bars acting to curb natural instincts. It was even seen as a matter of life or death, with Gypsies falling ill when put into houses and only recovering when they returned to their tents. It was not just that the Gypsies loved wandering, or that it was integral to their means of earning a living, or even that they were born to and socialised into that way of life, but that it was bred into them and was at the very core of their being. Gypsies wandered simply and solely because they could not help it.

Inevitably this caused a number of problems for outside commentators who had to explain why some Gypsies gave up the wandering way of life for settled employment and a permanent home, and why others temporarily abandoned the nomadic life for part of the year or even for part of their life. The explanations were various. For some observers, Gypsies could only settle when intermarriage had so diluted the blood that settlement without illness, or even death, was

possible. This was even thought to be the case when travelling was temporarily interrupted during winter months. One commentator thought that it was only the mumpers, or half-castes, who went in search of bricks and mortar, 'while the true dark Roman *[sic]* blood warms itself by the camp fire, and nothing more, during the severest of frosts and the deepest of snows'.[78] Others saw those who settled as not real Gypsies. But a more usual way of dealing with this problem was simply to ignore it, and many texts simply omit any mention of the settled component of the Gypsy population.

'Secret as a bud…primitive and shrewd'[79]

Two final aspects of the racial image of the Gypsy that deserve particular attention are those that stress their secretive and primitive nature and qualities. The secret nature of the group expressed itself in two main ways. First, the Gypsies adopted secretive strategies in order to preserve their group identity in the face of outsiders, to provide an inner cohesion and solidarity, and especially as a means of combating hostility and persecution.[80] As mentioned previously, a separate language, Romany, known only to themselves, was an important ingredient in their methods of survival.[81] Second, it was believed that the Gypsies possessed a secret, or understanding, which was known only to themselves. This latter view can be found in, for example, the work of the lorist Charles Leland:

> It is difficult to define what this understanding is – suffice it to say, that it keeps them all in many respects 'peculiar', and gives them a feeling of freemasonry, and of guarding a social secret, long after they leave the roads and become highly respectable members of society. But they have a secret, and no one can know them who has not penetrated it.[82]

This passage is interesting for a number of reasons. Leland gave a high degree of significance to this 'understanding' but was unable to define what it was, whilst also identifying it as the objective for any outsider, himself included, who wanted to truly 'know' the group. Leland also referred to the idea of the settled Gypsy and his successful assimilation into the sedentary way of life, but although an invisible member of 'respectable society', the Gypsy remained part of a secret masonic-style lodge, echoing the conspiratorial tone to be found in the work of Walter and James Simson.[83] Elsewhere, in a similar vein, Leland observed that the Gypsy remained invisible to the *gorgio,* hidden among the wider nomadic class of beggars, tramps, horse-dealers, tinkers, cheap jacks, showmen and the like, but within this larger grouping there existed a 'curious inner life, and freemasonry of secret intelligence, ties of blood and intelligence' that marked out the Gypsies as a special group.[84] Gypsy identity was thus associated with secrecy, mystery, the unknown, and the impenetrable: 'The Gipsy is still a riddle. Though he lives amongst us, he is less known than the long-buried

Assyrian.'[85] The mysteriousness and exoticism of the group not only were a product of their present secret ways but also stemmed from the uncertainty about their past.

'[T]he only free race'

The final element to be added to the racially constructed Gypsy is the view that they have always and everywhere remained a primitive and savage people, with their life seen as that of primeval man in communion with primeval nature.[86] Similarly, as with their childlike qualities, Africans/blacks were also regularly portrayed as lacking education, sophistication and culture, and were truly a primitive people living closer to nature than civilisation. Unlike that other primitive and savage people in England at the time, the Irish, this particular description of the Gypsies did not carry with it pejorative overtones. The primitive qualities of the group, a symbol of their racial purity and anti-modernity, were seen as marks of positive resistance or indifference to the forces of progress and civilisation. The Gypsies had voluntarily and deliberately turned their backs on the restraints of civil life, the confines of urban living, the routine of regular business and labour, normal conventions, the struggle for wealth and personal aggrandisement, and the normal comforts of material progress:

> they stand for the will for freedom, for friendship with nature, for the open air, for change and the sight of many lands; for all in us that is a protest against progress…the Gypsy represents Nature before civilisation. He is the wanderer whom all of us who are poets, or love the wind, are summed up in. He does what we dream. He is the last romance left in the world. His is the only free race.[87]

The resistance of the Gypsy to all attempts to force him into the social and commercial moulds of modern civilisation was even likened to the attempt to force a highly elastic substance into a confined space: it would only remain there under pressure and as soon as this was removed would spring back into its natural shape.[88]

From this image of the natural primitive, immune to progress, untouched by advances in the arts and sciences, and living a life of total freedom, developed the related notion that Gypsies were an anomaly and an anachronism in contemporary society, an exotic relic of a bygone age. In the late 1920s Konrad Bercovici, a noted Gypsiologist, referred to the Gypsies as a people who locked themselves out of the gates of modern civilisation, roaming freely on the highways and byways.[89] This indeed made the Gypsies a strange and mysterious people, and surprise was expressed at how a group so different and separate from everyone else was able to exist in Europe in the nineteenth century, let alone the twentieth:

> When you know a true specimen to the depths of his soul, you will find a character so entirely strange, so utterly at variance with your ordinary conceptions of humanity…[the Gypsy race] is more curious and radically distinct in all its characteristics than our writers, with one or two exceptions, have ever understood.[90]

In the 1880s Vernon Morwood wrote of the 'strange and mysterious' Gypsy race, widely different in terms of origin, life and habits, and concluded that they were a separate people.[91] In the 1960s the same sentiments continued to be freely expressed, with, for example, Jan Yoors writing of his love for 'this race of strangers who have lived among us for centuries and remain apart'.[92] Separateness has remained a significant keynote of the racial definition, undiminished by arguments concerning intermixing and assimilation.

Fixity of type and inherited traits

Initially at least, the Darwinian notions of evolution of type found little headway among the writers on Gypsies, who were content not only to argue for fixity of type in the present but also to date this back over centuries. The racial definition of the Gypsy depended on an image of the group which was unchanging. The physical, behavioural and other characteristics which were identified as separating the Gypsy from the non-Gypsy were thought to be constant over time, with the Gypsies preserving themselves as a race over many centuries, retaining their language, customs and Oriental features. In the British case it was thought that the Gypsies remained as distinctive, and in the same ways, in the nineteenth century as when they first arrived as immigrants in the sixteenth.[93] However, the argument also extends back further than this, with comparisons drawn between the contemporary group and the original tribe. Statements conveying these ideas are to be found in many sources:

> To-day their characteristics are as strongly marked as they were centuries ago.[94]

> a race of wanderers, with very marked peculiarities, not yet absorbed in the general population of the country, but retaining, so far as we know them, very much the same personal appearance, the same habits and customs, and, as we are told, the same language which their forefathers used four hundred years ago.[95]

> in the midst of the complications of Western civilisation an Eastern people contrive to keep their language, their blood, and even their amazing religion – or lack of religion – pure.[96]

> [The Gypsies] retain the prejudices and the outlook on life which their ancestors brought from Asia.[97]

> [The Gypsy has] maintained his independence for centuries, never forsaking the habits and customs of his first-known forefathers, and ever distinguished by an untameable love of liberty.[98]

In these typical expressions of the unchanging nature of the Gypsy people are to be found references to their inherited, permanent physical features, habits, customs, language, pure blood, prejudices and outlook on life. The shift from climatic or environmentalist explanations and the growing acceptance of emerging hereditary analyses of difference are only too clear.

One of the most explicit articulations of the heredity theory came not in the nineteenth century, as might be expected, but in the years after the Second World War. Dr H. Arnold, writing in the Gypsy Lore Society journal in 1961, claimed that the basis of wandering in family groups 'and other typical Gypsy attributes' could only be partly be explained by sociological factors and that a satisfactory explanation could only achieved if one accepted the existence of an 'hereditary psychical characteristic'.[99] Although he referred to both Gypsy ethnicity and racial type, the emphasis on inherited traits places Arnold in an established racial tradition. He suggested that

> the essential Gypsy nature is due to a hereditary characteristic which determines whether or not a person is in behaviour a Gypsy. Any person possessing this psychical characteristic would accordingly be regarded as a Gypsy. The external racial type would scarcely be significant.[100]

Important here is the emphasis on an inherent Gypsy nature and the notion of the Gypsy 'essence'. For some this was revealed in physical type, but for Arnold it was psychical and was used as the explanation of their wandering, as well as other 'Gypsy attributes'.

The idea from Arnold, among others, was that being a particular way, being of a certain physical type, behaving and thinking distinctively from others, and being driven by an 'untameable and deeply-rooted instinct' were transmitted through the blood.[101] Gypsies were born with an instinct and character that could neither be denied nor rejected. If the key, then, was transmission by blood, effectively a euphemism for genetic inheritance, then the maintenance of the purity of that blood became paramount. A chief means of ensuring this was by preventing dilution of the bloodstock by outsiders.

Fixed traits over time and racial purity could only be maintained if the group prevented dilution of their blood, and of their character, by marrying only their own kind (endogamy).[102] Marriage within the group preserved identity and, according to the argument, was the product of distinctive codes, practices and

beliefs governing courtship, morals and the choice of partners. Intermixing and intermarriage were seen as the greatest threat to the group and its separate identity. The difficulty, though, was that it was known that such interbreeding had taken place. For many, intermarriage was a relatively recent phenomenon, perhaps dating from the eighteenth century. Before this, the Gypsies were thought to have maintained their racial integrity and so their purity. But as one Gypsy lorist was forced, a little reluctantly, to concede, 'on the whole, there is tolerable evidence that intermarriage has been no very rare thing ever since the Gypsies have been in England'.[103] In an investigation into the extent of endogamy among the Gypsies W.H.R. Rivers concluded, on the basis of George Hall's study of the Heron family, that there is 'clear evidence of a great increase in the extent to which the Heron family has married outside a limited circle of pure Gypsy families'.[104]

The response to evidence of intermarriage, or exogamy, was threefold. First, it was thought that in any cross-breeding it would be the Gypsy blood that would dominate; hence the non-Gypsy would take the Gypsy way of life and customs rather than the Gypsy adopting a sedentary existence which, as mentioned previously, would be a denial of his or her very nature. This was seen as a product of the Gypsies' racial assertiveness, 'which causes the descendants of mixed marriages to revert to the Gypsy rather than to the Gajo type'.[105] Second, breeding with those outside the group was interpreted as a way of renewing the racial stock and giving it extra vigour. Finally, and somewhat paradoxically, it was also recognised that by the nineteenth century intermixing had occurred to such an extent that dilution was occurring and, rather than Gypsy blood dominating or the stock being renewed, the true Romany was being threatened. Arguments for racial purity therefore depended on a view that assimilation had not occurred to any significant extent since the Gypsies' first arrival, and also that it was not to be desired if Gypsies were to retain their separate existence and identity.

In one extreme case this argument about blood lines took on particular significance. In *The History of the Gypsies,* by Walter Simson, a volume which also includes a disquisition on the Gypsies by his son, James, the author/editor claimed to want to challenge the common negative views held about the Gypsies.[106] Yet the effect of their text was to fuel any latent fears of the unseen Gypsy menace by their argument that Gypsies had found their way into all walks of life and that they sought to hide their identity by 'drawing into their body the blood of the ordinary inhabitants and conforming to their ways'.[107] This passage distinctly echoes the anti-Semitic blood libel of Jews drawing the blood of Christian children, and is similarly portrayed as a means of giving stamina to the race. Intermixing, then, rather than leading to the dilution of the stock, permits the multiplication and concealment of the Gypsy race. This, they believed, was the consequence of Gypsy blood dominating any mixing with non-Gypsy blood and, with just one drop of Gypsy blood, making that person a Gypsy.[108] Gypsy identity was preserved intact however much intermixing had taken place, as the

Gypsy race could absorb, but could not be absorbed by, other races.[109] The Simsons therefore saw the Gypsy as permanently and irreversibly being the product of the merest drop of Gypsy blood, and in this anticipated the anti-Semitic race science of the Nazis. As the Gypsy blood dominated all others, all descendants of Gypsies, however remote and however 'diluted' the blood line, remained Gypsies. This admixture had resulted in the disappearance of overt physical differences between the Gypsy and non-Gypsy populations, but they nevertheless had retained their secret society, likened to the Masonic lodges, by showing and responding to secret signs. Moreover, it was of no concern that the Gypsies did not differ in any obvious or visible way from the rest of the population as their identity was primarily a mental phenomenon and the mere consciousness of being a Gypsy was sufficient for their identity to be preserved.[110] For the Simsons a settled way of life was immaterial to their true identity, as more important was 'a sense of tribe or soul of nationality, that is inherent in the blood'.[111]

The very distinctive racial views of Walter and James Simson should not, though, be taken as typical. More usually, arguments concerning a static identity suggested that interaction between the group and the wider society had been minimal, with Gypsies maintaining their exclusivity and separateness. An unchanging identity over time implied that only very limited mixing or assimilation had taken place, and also that Gypsies and/or the host society were not able or willing to undertake such relations.

'I am of the true blood of my race': the racial hierarchy[112]

The discussion so far has been concerned with identifying the characteristics of the racial Gypsy which separated them from non-Gypsies. Many of these distinctive features will reappear in the discussion of the ethnic Gypsy, but with some important differences. The racial definition of the group goes beyond mere factual descriptions of difference and takes from nineteenth-century race thinking notions of hierarchy, superiority and inferiority, which are then applied to the Gypsy and nomadic population. The extent to which any or all of the above characteristics could be identified became the chief means of establishing purity of race. Similarly, explanations of difference were also explored, with the identifiable distinguishing features being seen as the products of heredity, thereby having important implications for the unchanging character of the people. The identity of those who came within the boundaries was also confirmed, thus establishing permanent barriers separating them from 'others'. Moreover, by establishing the separate nature of the people, a supra-national Gypsy race was created whose similarities and shared features across national borders overrode any nationally based differences.

However, Gypsiologists, like the racial theorists and scientists of the nineteenth century, recognised that the purity of the group, or racial type, was threatened and compromised by intermixing. In relation to the Gypsy group this

problem was resolved by creating a hierarchy, at the top of which stood the ideal, pure type. By the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the concept of race, and specifically of racial purity, had permitted the identification of the true Gypsy, the real Romany, the full Gypsy, possessing pure blood, full blood, dark blood, or *kalo ratt.* Just as the nineteenth-century race thinkers endeavoured to identify the original pure races, and found them in a fixed number of original types, so the Gypsiologists found their pure race in the Romany Gypsy, the 'black Romanitshel'. Mirroring the hybrids and diluted stock who emerged out of miscegenation or cross-breeding, Gypsiologists also found their half-breeds and half-castes in groups with diluted Gypsy blood, known as didakais, half-and-halves, posh-rats, and those of no Gypsy blood or very diluted blood in the mumpers, mumplies, tramps, cadgers and hedge-crawlers. When the intellectual climate of the time stressed the importance of race and agonised over the consequences of racial interbreeding, it is no surprise that those people who studied the Gypsies, from whatever perspective, adopted the same analytical methods and arrived at similar conclusions concerning the positive benefits of purity and the diluted and negative consequences of intermixing.

Distinguishing between those of pure and those of diluted blood was thought by most to be an easy matter, though not all agreed on the exact criterion for testing racial purity. The Reverend T.W. Norwood was by no means alone in thinking that 'language is the best test of race'.[113] However, alternative criteria were also proposed. Of these, the most important were thought to be physical differences, with the true Gypsy possessing all the physiological features described above, such as tawny skin and black raven hair. It was not uncommon for visitors to the Gypsy camps to come across children not only with dark hair and skin but also with blonde hair, fair skin and blue eyes. The conclusion drawn was always that 'the dark one had more of the Gypsy character',[114] usually for no other reason than that a dark appearance fitted pre-formed opinions about physical type.

Some individuals were seen as being the 'real old black originals', and so of pure stock,[115] and the observation that dark tints and regularity of features were evidence of pure blood was the rule in a large number of nineteenth-century texts, not the exception.[116] For some the key to race purity lay in the eyes, and the purebred Gypsy could be distinguished by 'a certain Romany look'.[117]

Having created the hierarchy the next stage was to represent the pyramid according to a sliding scale, with the most positive features being present at the apex. Consequently, many devices were adopted to place the pure Gypsy race in a positive light. One particular method was to place the Gypsies in a romanticised, rural, idyllic setting: 'Sunshine, unrestrained liberty to roam through lanes, woods, and wilds, and the music of birds, seem to be necessary to the happiness and life of gipsies.'[118] This familiar backdrop created a sense of the past, freedom, traditional ways and harmonious relations. In conjunction with this the Gypsies' way of life, and indeed their very character, was portrayed as natural, wild, free and at one with Nature. On occasion this led to a direct

analogy with the animal world, with the Gypsies said to possess such animal qualities as abandonment, physical grace and stealth. This was also made explicit to the reader in the opening pages of Charles Leland's *The Gypsies,* where he explained that the purpose of the book was to teach the lesson of freedom and nature, with the Gypsy providing one of the links which connected the 'simple feeling of nature with romance'.[119]

Images are painted of hospitable Gypsies, village greens, the pleasures of an outdoor life, of tent interiors which resemble Rembrandt paintings,[120] and of smoke climbing peacefully from tents on quiet summer evenings, located in the dells, dingles, deep woods and green lanes of bucolic England.[121] The following brief extract plays on the childlike and mysterious qualities of the Gypsies whilst also emphasising the physical qualities of the people and the attractions of an *al fresco* life:

> Is not our artistic taste gratified by the blue smoke curling from the brown, picturesque tent, and losing itself in the denser blue sky! Look at the lithe, graceful figure of this youth striking the unconscious beauty of a Southerner's attitude against the rugged tent-door: look at that slip of a girl, unkempt, ragged, but with the promise of exceeding beauty in the white gleam of close set teeth, and the soft eyes glowing in the oval, tawny face, full of the free, joyous abandon of untrammelled childhood.[122]

A nostalgia for the past not only permitted but demanded a place for the colourful and romantic Gypsy. Often the point was made by contrasting the Gypsy on the common, 'amid furze and heather, with wide fields of lavender stretching beyond', with the condition of the 'mixed lot' living in ash-strewn, grimy and cramped yards.[123] A similar point was made in a further passage in Hall's book, where, on coming across an encampment in Gypsy Court, Lincoln, he combines ideas of racial purity with reference to the wandering instinct of the true Romany:

> I would not have imagined that the inhabitants of the squalid court were of the best black Romany breed; far from it, they were mostly of diluted blood, else how came they to turn sedentary at all.[124]

Hall seemed to be especially concerned with identifying the various grades and shades of the Gypsy, separating them into superior types, physically and morally, and worst specimens, based primarily on the idea of blood purity. The purer the blood, the more superior the grade.[125]

Inevitably, just as the true Gypsy was thought to possess all the superior qualities associated with being a Gypsy, so the half-caste was thought to possess all the bad. Echoing current eugenicist arguments about the dangers of interbreeding, Robert Macfie wrote that half-breeds 'combine the vices of both nations, and, by some malignant law of nature, shed the good qualities'.[126] Without exception, the image given of the half-breed was unremittingly hostile,

with emphasis given to their foul habits, degraded ignorance, want of decency, brutal existence and corrupt behaviour. In short, while the natural life of the true Romany was not only acceptable but also a refreshing glimpse of a past, ideal life, the half-castes were a disgrace to a civilised and Christian society.[127] S.L. Bensusan, writing in the late 1890s, recounted a story of meeting a Gypsy in a pub, and, having explained that this person lived by stealing, explained this departure from pure Gypsy ways by stating that the real Romany had died out and the person she met was of 'the mongrel race' and was 'an animal of the lowest type'.[128] Bensusan was by no means alone in making this kind of judgement and any departure from a fixed image of an ideal type inevitably led to these conclusions.

However, the impression that the racial definition of the true Gypsy was always positive and romantic and that of the didakai always hostile and negative is broadly, though not entirely, the full picture. For some writers, the Gypsy race were not the romantic group portrayed by the lorists and others, but something more sinister and threatening. The idea that certain traits were inherited could take on a much more negative dimension, with Gypsies also presented as a race of hereditary criminals, living by deception, theft and robbery,[129] and as a semibarbarous race of child-stealers and child-mutilators.[130] Scenes are presented of depredation and violence, and the group is portrayed as being prone to savage bouts of passion, barbarous rage and as being verminous, ferocious and vindictive.[131]

The primitive and animal imagery, mentioned previously, also had a more hostile dimension when the Gypsies were presented as being just one step removed from the animal kingdom, especially in relation to their mental and moral state, and lacking in the civilised, human characteristics of honesty, uprightness, virtue and, perhaps most importantly in the eyes of the Victorian Christian commentators, spirituality. They were seen as content to remain in their primitive ignorance, knowing nothing of the benefits of a higher way of life, and their resistance to progress was not seen as an anti-modern victory for romanticism but as an avoidance of all moral obligations.[132] The Gypsies' only concerns were with basic needs, sharing with the animal kingdom the prime necessity of having to hunt for food to sustain life, and lacking any higher desires, the basic morality of even the humblest and lowliest peasant, and any sense of religion.[133]

Reproducing the romantic Romany

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the race concept has continued to have widespread circulation and application throughout the twentieth century, and is to be found in popular understanding of human difference, language, a myriad of cultural forms and, finally, even in certain academic circles. As with the concept broadly, so too with its specific usage in relation to the Gypsies. Many of the original sources for the racial definition, from Grellmann to the many lorists,

continue to have a major influence on researchers and those interested in Gypsy history, often leading to an uncritical repetition of the earlier arguments. Kay Henwood, in a book which makes some pretence to a scholarly study by its inclusion of a short bibliography, simply repeats the language and images of the originals.[134] Readers of this volume are again introduced to the Romany race, a pure-bred group, unchanging over 1,000 years, living an idyllic life close to nature. It is in the Gypsies' bones to wander, and romanticised pictures are given of heaths, squatting around open fires, feasting, drinking, music, songs and dance. The Gypsies are given the same physiological characteristics first described by Grellmann in the late eighteenth century, and the nineteenth-century lorists' catalogue of distinctive customs is once again given an airing. The heavy reliance on Gypsy lorist sources can be found in a great many more recent studies, which uncritically reproduce the ideas, arguments, language and spirit of the originals.[135]

Alongside such focused monograph studies, the Gypsies have also held especial appeal for the bohemian imagination of artists, poets, dramatists and fiction writers across the ages and throughout all of Europe. In fine art and 'high-brow' literature, in the less 'respectable' penny dreadfuls and railway literature, and in both light and serious operas, the Gypsies regularly appear in the familiar guise of exotic, dark-skinned, nomadic and romantically alluring rural nomads.[136] Clearly not every portrayal of the fortune telling Gypsy, or the obviously rural and romantic associations, or the colourful dress of the group, is necessarily, consciously or otherwise, promoting the racial perspective. However, there are also good reasons for making these general associations and assumptions. The description of the fortune telling Gypsy plays on the notion of inherited, special qualities peculiar to the (racial) group; colourful dress is just one part of the distinctive culture and appearance of the Gypsy and is commonly linked to the distinctive physiognomy of the group; and the rural and romantic imagery, which often go together, were dominant during the period when the race concept was at its peak and were usually part of a composite picture that drew in many or all of the characteristics described above.

The typical representation of the Gypsy emphasised their picturesque qualities, their associations with nature, and a natural beauty which enhanced the physical and emotional landscape. They also made regular appearances as the love interest with erotic overtones. While the Gypsy featured prominently in the anti-modernist discourses of nineteenth-century romanticism, this imagery was by no means confined to that epoch. Although Romanticism as a movement declined in significance, it remained a cultural strand into the twentieth century and is present, for example, in the paintings of Augustus John, the lyrics of contemporary songwriters, and numerous fictional works and screenplays.[137]

In fictional writing the Gypsies appeared in works by the anonymous authors of penny dreadfuls and railway literature, and by minor authors, as well as by some of the best-known novelists of their generation, including Walter Scott and D.H. Lawrence.[138] In the latter's *The Virgin and the Gypsy* an account is given

which incorporates references to physical appearance, dress, manner, character and ideas of racial purity:

> the man in the cart was a gypsy, one of the black, loose-bodied, handsome sort…and his pose was loose, his gaze insolent in its indifference. He had a thin black moustache under his thin, straight nose, and a bog silk handkerchief of red and yellow tied around his neck.[139]

Among descriptions which focus on brown skin, bright clothing, lithe physique, musicality and pretty women, John Buchan, in his *John Burnet of Barns,* offers a similar view to Lawrence's:

> The free, open-air life and the healthy fare makes *[sic]* them strong in body and extraordinarily graceful in movement. Their well-formed features, their keen, laughing black eyes, their rich complexions, and, above all, their masses of coal-black hair become them choicely well. So there in the ruddy firelight they danced to the quavering music.[140]

Some writers, including Lady Elinor Smith, returned regularly to the Gypsy theme, while others, including Bulwer Lytton and Captain Marryat, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charles Reade and George Meredith, simply used them as minor romantic and mysterious characters, for plot development or merely to illustrate 'the charms of the wandering life and the joys of living close to nature'.[141] Tilford notes that the Gypsies were a 'natural ingredient for romantic literature' because of their strange ways, fortune telling, incomprehensible language and bizarre appearance.[142] In Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* we find one of the best-known Gypsy fictional characters in the character of Esmeralda. One writer from the 1880s commented that novelists from time immemorial made the love of a *gorgio* for a Gypsy girl a pet incident in their tales.[143] Henry Fielding takes a slightly different approach, but one which still contributes to the racial picture, by describing in a lengthy passage the Gypsies' separate laws and formal government, presided over by their king.[144] Among the names of fictional writers on Gypsies will be found those of some well-known, 'serious' students of Romany life, including the Gypsy lorists and Romany Rais such as Francis Hindes Groome, Theodore Watts Dunton, Walter Starkie and Konrad Bercovici.[145] However, not all the literary representations adhered to the romantic. The popular Irish author Robertson Davies, in his *Deptford Trilogy,* employs the negative racial imagery of Gypsies as a race of child-stealers and 'evil people', whose purpose was to inflict cruelty: 'they had stolen him to be cruel, to rob a mother of her child and a child of his mother'.[146]

This, though, is to restrict the focus, and when considering the reproduction of the racial image it is equally important to consider the lesser-known works and forgotten pamphlets, penny dreadfuls and railway literature, which, arguably, found their way into the consciousness of far greater numbers of people. The

Haldine Half-Holiday Library series included numerous stories of romance involving idealised Gypsy princesses. Images which focus on the physical appearance of the Gypsies, their nomadic and rural lifestyle, and on their distinctive character, not least in its romantic aspects, can also be found repeated in verse,[147] travelling theatre productions,[148] children's fiction and music lyrics. Moreover, the written image finds its close counterpart in visual representations.

Gypsies have long held the fascination of artists and, as in literature, they feature prominently through the ages, providing a visual complement to the romanticised written representations. The artist most closely associated with Gypsy themes was the internationally renowned Augustus John, who not only took his personal interest in the Gypsies to the canvas but also played an active role in the Gypsy Lore Society as a long-serving member and then president. He became attracted to the group as a result of his acquaintance with John Sampson when working in Liverpool, Sampson as a librarian at the university and John at the School of Art.[149] They visited sites together, drawn to the healthy, attractive strangers whose way of life, in their eyes, challenged uniformity and subservience. A contemporary acquaintance of John, Eryl Vize, who lived as a Gypsy in Chilly Hill, New Forest, also drew her artistic inspiration from the Gypsies, painting colourful scenes 'full of the Gypsy spirit'.[150] Similar rural and romanticised scenes and portraits can be found in the work of Alfred Munnings, a Royal Academy member, Gainsborough, Francis Wheatley, in the 'picturesque' school of Leader, Boddington and Williams, and in the works of George Morland, Henry Alken, C.R. Leslie, Henry Milbourne, Amelia Goddard and Irving Montagu.[151]

While many of the lorists not only accepted but actively contributed to the romanticised and fictional representation of the Gypsy, there were the occasional voices of protest of the images being presented.[152] But acknowledgement of the inaccuracies contained in the canvases of painters and the pages of novels were few, and instead the romanticised race of Gypsies remain immortalised in all forms of British culture, eagerly devoured by a public with an apparently insatiable appetite for romantic idylls.

'An interesting anomaly in the modern world'

By describing the Gypsies as a race, and by identifying the many features which characterised and defined the race, an identity was being established which covered Gypsies everywhere. The common features which the race shared in common were seen as more significant than any differences which might exist as a result of living in different nations. Certainly differences were allowed between, for example, the English Romanies and German Roma, or between the Gypsies of Hungary, the Vlach Roma, and Spain, but these were variations within an overall common type. As mentioned in one typical statement of worldwide racial identity, 'Gipsies are Gipsies the world over'.[153] Joseph Lucas, writing in the 1880s, saw Gypsies as scattered and split into many 'petty

kingdoms', but they remained, 'however divided, members of one and the same stock, all speaking one language which they have carried about among the nations for nearly five centuries'.[154] They were easily recognised wherever they were seen as they shared the same physical appearance and their character, language, behaviour and way of life were similarly in evidence.

Many of the racial images of the Gypsies have a strong resemblance to those applied to other minority groups. The parallels with the Jews have already been noted and the representations of the group as childlike, primitive and savage were also descriptions commonly applied to non-European peoples, especially those with black skins or those of Eastern or Oriental origin. Clearly, then, the Gypsies are not a special case. Similarly, as with representations of other groups, the descriptions and understanding of the group could be used both to elevate the group and to condemn them. The racial Gypsy was both the romantic representative of a past life and the hereditary criminal. For the most part, the former image remained dominant, largely as a result of the work of a devoted band of Gypsy lovers who did much to promote the positive picture, exerting a general influence over the producers of fiction, art and reporting. This has led to the racial definition having a strength that even held firm in the face of contrary and potentially extremely damaging evidence. When evidence was provided which challenged the idea of racial purity in any way, often uncovered by the authors themselves and seen with their own eyes, it was usually ignored.

While it was possible to step outside the restrictive parameters of nineteenth-century race thinking, it is evident that writers from Borrow to the lorists manifestly failed to do this. Instead, they applied the assumptions, methodology and conclusions of racial typology with vigour and determination. The resulting image of the Gypsy, which can be found in a considerable number and range of sources, incorporated all the components of race classification. The continued reliance on such sources for knowledge about the group and the constant reproduction of the race image into the twentieth century is a key element in the persistent hold on the popular imagination of notions of 'real' Romanies and 'true' Gypsies. In this way the representation of Gypsies also contributes to the persistence of race classification itself. The view that the character of the Gypsy is fixed and permanent is prevalent in Eastern Europe, notably among professionals with medical and scientific backgrounds.[155] The *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* has continued to publish articles which emphasise the physical distinctiveness of the people;[156] Charles Duff, in 1963, used the racial criteria of blood purity to distinguish Romanes from pos-rats (half-blood), didakois (mixed, less than half) and travellers (no blood);[157] and a scholarly article in an eminent academic journal in 1985 continued to describe Gypsies as a race.[158] Although the concept of race, and its use in relation to Gypsies and other minority groups, has been condemned in the post-1945 period, the ideas and images remain.

Notes

1 See, for example, the tabloid/magazine section of the *Independent,* 2 July 1997, p. 11. The Gypsy look in fashion (ruffles, ruches, romance, lace and chiffon) was also adopted by Christian Dior, Galliano and Yves St Laurent in their spring/summer 2002 collections. See *Independent on Sunday,* 7 October 2001.

2 For example, Wim Willems notes that this was the topic of an essay prize at the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences (Stockholm) in 1779. See W. Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London, 1997), p. 25.

3 See Colonel W.F. Prideaux, 'Major-General John Staples Harriot', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* [hereafter *JGLS],* New Series, Vol. 4, No. 1 July 1910, pp. 445–464. See also John Staples Harriot, 'Observations on the Oriental origin of the Romnichal, or tribe miscalled Gypsey and Bohemian', *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,* Vol. 2, 1830, pp. 518–558. A manuscript annotation in the margins of the copy held in the Scott Macfie Collection, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool [hereafter, Gypsy Lore Society Archive], MS.10.31 (1) comments: 'This idiot has evidently seen none of the books he mentions'!

4 See F.H. Groome, 'Gipsy folk-tales: a missing link', *National Review,* Vol. XI, 1888, pp. 659–673.

5 Dora Esther Yates, MSS notes for lecture, Gypsy Lore Society Archive [hereafter GLS] D11(3).

6 The figure of 3,000 was amended to 5,000 in later drafts.

7 R.A.S. Macfie, 'Gypsy lore', *University Review,* Vol. 7, No. 38, November 1908, p. 100.

8 Joseph Lucas has argued that when the theory of Indian origins was first proposed it did not gain general acceptance as a belief in Egyptian origins was so deeply rooted. See Joseph Lucas, 'Petty Romany', *The Nineteenth Century,* October 1880, p. 578.

9 Willems (1997), pp. 40–41.

10 See Samuel Roberts, 'A word for the Gipsies', in his *The Blind Man and His Son: A Tale for Young People* (London, 1816); *Parallel Miracles: Or the Jews and the Gypsies* (London, Sheffield [printed], 1830); *The Gypsies; their Origin, Continuance and Destination, as clearly foretold in the Prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (London, Sheffield [printed], 1836; 5th edn enlarged, 1842).

11 Ezekiel, xxix, 12 and xxx, 23.

12 C.G. Leland, *The English Gipsies and Their Language* (London, 1874), p. 132.

13 See C.G. Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling. Illustrated by Incantations, Specimens of Medical Magic, Anecdotes, Tales* (1891; New York, 1962). See also K. Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies* (London, 1929).

14 R.A.S. Macfie, 'The Gypsies', TS of lecture delivered to the Hawes Literary Society, 21 October 1927. Scott Macfie Collection, Gypsy Lore Society Archive,. MS.2.31–2.

15 Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Oxford, 1997), p. 123.

16 R.A.S. Macfie, 'The Gypsies: an outline sketch', *The Romanitshels', Didakais' and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 1, No. 3, June–October 1912, p. 75.
17 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, p. 75. For a list of books on language, see *A Catalogue of the Romany Collection, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds* (Edinburgh, 1962).
18 See Macfie, 'The Gypsies', TS. Rüdiger (1751–1822) is also referred to by the alternative first names Johann Christian Christoph. Miklosich is noted as one of the first scholars to try to track the path of Gypsy emigration through a study of their language. See Willems (1997), pp. 79–82; Yaron Matras, 'Johann Rüdiger and the study of Romani in 18th century Germany', *JGLS,* Vol. 9, No. 2, 1999, pp. 89–116.
19 Miklosich believed he had managed to trace Gypsy origins to the plains of the Hindu Kush in northern India. See Jan Yoors, *The Gypsies* (New York, 1967), p. 10.
20 Angus Fraser, 'A rum lot', in Matt T. Salo (ed.), *100 Years of Gypsy Studies. Papers from the 10th Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, North America Chapter, March 25–27, 1988* (Cheverly, Maryland, 1990), p. 2. See also D.P. Singhal, *Gypsies: Indians in Exile* (Meerut, 1982).
21 Various commentators have noted that Rüdiger took his ideas from a discovery by a Leiden University theology student, Stefan or Stephanus Vályi, of the linguistic connection between Romani and Indian. Willems also notes that at the time and subsequently Grellmann's linguistic research and arguments were much criticised. See Willems (1997), p. 57.
22 Sanskrit is the oldest of the family of Indo-European languages and has been described as the 'mother' of all Indian and European languages. It is therefore not surprising that similarities with Romani could be found as this would also be the case with other European languages. In the eighteenth century Sir William Jones, a British Orientalist, suggested that the languages of Europe had a common ancestral tongue and that Romani's closest surviving relative was Sanskrit. See the review of George Borrow in *Dublin University Magazine,* 1843, pp. 251–253, quoted in Willems (1997), p. 157; and Gossett (1997), p. 123.
23 For example one writer produced a table comparing English, Gypsy, Hindi or Hindustani, and Persian or Sanskrit words. See Harriot, 'Observations on the Oriental origin'. Grellmann was used as the basis for this.
24 See O.S.T. Drake, 'A strange people and a strange language', *Churchmans Shilling Magazine,* Vol. **XIX,** 1876, pp. 31–38.
25 B. Smart and H.T. Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gypsies* (London, 1875), p. xxii. This book is primarily a vocabulary of Romany words and their English equivalents.
26 See Bercovici (1929). Bercovici based his conclusions largely on the earlier works of Grellmann, Pott, Bataillard and Sir Richard Burton.
27 John Burrow has suggested that comparative philology entered English intellectual life in the early part of the nineteenth century. See J. Burrow, 'The uses of philology in Victorian England', in R. Robson (ed.), *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark* (London, 1967), pp. 187–189. Burrow notes how, from the mid-nineteenth century, comparative philology moved from the general study of classical literature and increasingly drew links with ethnology, history and geography.

28 Michael D. Biddiss, 'Myths of the blood: European racist ideology 1850–1945', *Patterns of Prejudice,* Vol. ix, No. 5, 1975, p. 14.
29 Richard M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A History* (London, 1968), p. 160.
30 Müller was of German origin, coming to England in 1846. See Dorson (1968), chapter 5. By the 1880s Müller had abandoned the idea that race and language were necessarily related. See Gossett (1997), pp. 123–124.
31 Dorson (1968), p. 201.
32 The exact timing of the migration has been the subject of much debate. Grellmann proposed that the Gypsies were driven out of India by Tamerlane at the end of the fourteenth century. Later Gypsiologists and proponents of the racial theory prefer a much earlier migration whilst also recognising that the Gypsies' early history is obscure and that the sources are unreliable. Bercovici (1929, p. 42) made a frustrated plea that '[e]very ray of light has to be followed to its source. Legends, tales, words, habits and customs must be sifted carefully'
33 Antonio Gomez Alfaro, 'Romani dictionaries', *Interface* [The Newsletter of the Gypsy Research Centre, Université René Descartes, Paris], Vol. 28, November 1997, p. 6. For example, the work of Rüdiger has been described as intuitive and analytically naïve. See Matras (1999), p. 89.
34 See Joseph Lucas, *The Yetholm History of the Gypsies* (Kelso, 1882); Joseph Lucas, 'Petty Romany', *The Nineteenth Century,* October 1880, pp. 578–592. For the critical observa tions on his work, see Alexander Russell (ed.), 'Lucas's vocabulary', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1914–1915, pp. 287–296.
35 Bercovici (1929), p. 35.
36 'Gipsies', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* Vol. xlix, January–June 1866, pp. 565–580.
37 Leland (1874), p. x.
38 Singhal (1982), p. 22.
39 See Arthur Symons, 'In praise of Gypsies', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1908, pp. 294–299; Arthur Thesleff, 'Report on the Gypsy problem', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1911–1912, p. 84.
40 See [S.B. James], 'Gipsies', *The Graphic,* Vol. 10, 19 September 1874, p. 289; R.A.S. Macfie, 'Gypsies at home', TS, 1912, p. 1, Scott Macfie Collection, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, MS 10.26; The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, p. 87. For further examples of this representation of the physical appearance of the Gypsies, see Vernon Morwood, *Our Gipsies in City, Tent and Van. Containing an account of their origin and strange life, fortune-telling practices, &c., specimens of their dialect, and amusing anecdotes of Gipsy Kings, Queens and other Gipsy Notabilities* (London, 1885); Arlo Bates, 'Gipsy George', *Atlantic Monthly,* Vol. 11, 1907, pp. 473–479; 'Gipsies', *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,* No. 142, 21 June 1834, p. 235; 'Meeting of the Gipsies: another of Mrs. Bayly's thoughtful plans', *Weekly Record of the National Temperance League,* No. 352, 2 February 1861, p. 40; 'Gipsies', *Eliza Cook's Journal,* Vol. 10, 1854, pp. 30–32; William A. Dutt, 'With the East Anglian Gypsies', *Good Words,* Vol. 37, 1896, pp. 120–126; Mary Harrison, 'Gipsies', *Sunday Magazine,* Vol. 14, 1885, pp. 494–502; 'Gipsies', *Sharpe's London Magazine,* Vol. 7, 1848, pp. 169–172; 'Gipsies and fortune-telling. From a lady's note-book', *Bow Bells,* Vol. 16, 1873, p. 502. The images contained in these sources can be found in a great many others, far too numerous to list, but it is hoped

that those given here provide an indication of the diversity of publications in which these representations appeared.

41 See Gypsy Lore Society printed circular, November 1922. GLS, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, Ll.28.

42 Bercovici (1929), p. 29. In Hindustani 'Jat' means robber, pirate and abject creature.

43 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, pp. 71–72. Dora Esther Yates, in her lectures on Gypsies, offered a strikingly similar description, using very similar language. MSS notes for lecture, GLS, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, D.11 1 (3).

44 See, for example, the descriptions provided in Morwood (1885).

45 F. Cuttriss, *Romany Life. Experienced and Observed during Many Years of Friendly Intercourse with the Gypsies* (London, 1915), pp. 86, 154 and chapter 5.

46 See James Crabb, *The Gipsies' Advocate; or Observations on the Origin, Character, Manners, and Habits, of the English Gipsies: to which are added Many Interesting Anecdotes on the success that has attended the plans of several benevolent individuals who anxiously desire their conversion to God* (1831; 3rd edn with additions, London, 1832), p. 24; E. Deutsch, 'Gypsies', *Chambers' Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 5, 1863, p. 172.

47 W.M. Adams, 'The wandering tribes of Great Britain (the way some folks live)', *Cassell's Family Magazine,* 1883, p. 728.

48 See Dora Esther Yates, MS notes for lecture, GLS, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, D. 11 (3). On birth, marriage, death, *patran,* omens and charms, see T.W. Thompson, 'Gipsies', *Tramp Magazine,* Vol. 2, 1910, pp. 50–52. On peculiar habits and customs, see V. Morwood, 'English Gipsies', *Victoria Magazine,* Vol. 9, 1867, pp. 291–294, 499–504; 'The Gipsies', *European Magazine,* Vol. lxx, September 1816, pp. 240–241; Macfie, 'Gypsy lore'. See also Singhal (1982), a volume published for the Folklore Institute.

49 Leland (1891), p. xxvi.

50 See Groome, 'Gypsy folk-tales'.

51 See W.A. Dutt, 'With the East Anglian Gypsies', *Good Words,* Vol. 37, 1896, pp. 120–126; Jarvis and Turtle noted that 'superstitions of all kinds undoubtedly possess and sway the gipsy mind and govern their habits'. See A.W. Jarvis and R. Turtle, 'Gipsy life', *The Idler,* Vol. 32, 1907, p. 22. See also Morwood (1885).

52 D. Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 76. For a full account of the ancient system of beliefs and taboos current among the Boswell Gypsy family in the Midlands, see T.W. Thompson, 'The uncleanness of women among English Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1922, pp. 15–43; Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, p. 79.

53 See T.W. Thompson, 'The social polity of the English Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1923, pp. 113–139; Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, pp. 79–80; Morwood (1885), pp. 137–143; T.W. Thompson, 'Gypsy marriage in England', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 5, No. 1,1926; W. Simson, *A History of the Gipsies with Specimens of the Gipsy Language, edited, with Preface, Introduction, and Notes, and a Disquisition on the Past, Present and Future of Gipsydom by James Simson* (London, [1866?]), pp. 260–263; E.B. Trigg, 'Magic and religion amongst the Gypsies of Great Britain', D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1967, and his book *Gypsy Demons and Divinities: The Magical and Supernatural Practices of the*

Gypsies (New Jersey, 1973); Audrey Butler, 'I married a Gypsy', *Woman,* 7 April 1960, pp. 23–30, and 14 April 1960, pp. 23, 25, 57, 61, 63.

54 W.B., 'The Gipsies of the Border', *Monthly Chronicle of North Country Lore and Legend,* 189l, pp. 205–208.

55 Macfie, 'Gypsy lore', pp. 106–107; W. Crooke, 'The burning of the property of a Gypsy at death', *Folk-Lore,* Vol. 20, 1909, p. 353; Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, pp. 79–80; Mayall (1988), p. 77; H.T. Crofton, 'Affairs of Egypt, 1892–1906', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1908, pp. 366–367; H.T. Crofton, 'Affairs of Egypt, 1908', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1910, p. 283; *Notes and Queries,* Vol. 3, 6 June 1857, pp. 442–443; *Notes and Queries,* Vol. 12, 19 December 1903, p. 496; C.G. Leland, *The English Gipsies and their Language* (London, 1873; 1874), p. 58; *Notes and Queries,* Vol. 3, 29 May 1869, p. 518; B. Skot (pseudonym of R.A.S. Macfie), *A Brief Account of Gypsy History* (Liverpool, 1909), p. 52; J. Crabb (1832), pp. 28–29; Morwood (1885), p. 174; Bercovici (1929), p. 250.

56 Mayall (1988), p. 77; see also T.W. Thompson, 'The uncleanness of women among English Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1922, pp. 15–43.

57 Mayall (1988), p. 77

58 See Eric Otto Winstedt and T.W. Thompson, 'Gypsy dances', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1912–1913, pp. 19–33.

59 Jarvis and Turtle, 'Gipsy life', p. 14. See also Bercovici (1929), p. 26.

60 Yoors (1967), p. 174.

61 T.W. Thompson, 'Borrow's Gypsies', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1910, pp. 169–171.

62 Macfie, 'Gypsy lore', p. 104.

63 Rev. G. Hall, *The Gypsy's Parson. His Experiences and Adventures* (London, 1894), p. 92; Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, p. 74; W.M. Gallichan, 'The state versus the Gypsy', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1908, pp. 350–358. Eric Otto Winstedt ('Gypsy Civilisation', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1908, pp. 344, 347) describes them as 'essentially children all their lives' and as 'nature's children'. A letter from the Rev. John Parker to Canon Bartlett, 26 January 1908, GLS, B2 (88), also refers to them as 'children of nature'. See also Yoors (1967), p. 50.

64 T.W. Thompson, 'Gipsies: an account of their character, mode of life, folk-lore, and language', *Tramp Magazine,* Vol. 2, 1910, pp. 46–47.

65 Rev. G. Hall, 'The Gipsies of England', *Sunday at Home,* April 1912, pp. 417–418.

66 'Gipsies', *New Monthly Magazine,* Vol. 35, 1832, pp. 375–377.

67 Jarvis and Turtle, 'Gipsy life', pp. 14–23.

68 'The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, p. 86.

69 C.G. Leland, *The English Gipsies and their Language* (London, 1873; 1874), pp. 46–47.

70 Yoors (1967), p. 13.

71 Leland (1874), p. 164. Leland also sees these qualities as being infectious:

> whether dog or cat, cock or jackdaw, all animals bred among Gipsies do unquestionably become themselves Rommanised, and grow sharp, shrewd, and mysterious…. The quaint shrewdness, the droll roguery, the demure devilry of a real Gipsy dog are beyond all praise.

(Leland, 1874, pp. 164–165.)

72 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, p. 74. This is by no means an exhaustive listing of the characteristics said to define the group. See also Frank Cuttriss (1915), for a long list of features which includes reference to their taciturn and suspicious nature, their changeable temperament, their cunning and childlike qualities, their generosity and honesty, and their warmth of heart and love of children.
73 John E. Tilford, 'The Gypsy in English literature', *Emory University Quarterly,* Vol. 2, 2 June 1946, p. 87.
74 MSS notes for lecture, GLS,.D11.(3).
75 Macfie, 'Gypsy lore', p. 104; T.W. Thompson, 'Gipsies: an account of their character, mode of life, folk-lore, and language', p. 47.
76 E.O. Winstedt ('Gypsy civilisation', p. 348) stated that the Gypsy wanders 'because it is bred in him'.
77 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, pp. 72–73; also 'The Gypsies', TS, p. 27.
78 Rev. S.B.James, 'English Gypsies', *Church of England Magazine,* Chapter 2, No. 2333, 18 September 1875, p. 161.
79 'Secret as a bud and slippery as water, the ethos of the gypsy is a curious blend of elements pagan and Christian, primitive and shrewd, bucolic and bestial.' Leland, 1891, p. v.)
80 See Yoors (1967) for a description of the Gypsies' elaborate systems of protective screens, magic auras and curses.
81 Interestingly, at the same time as suggesting that their language was a means of preserving their secrecy, the Romany Rais also thought that by learning it they had obtained the key which would unlock the people and also that the Gypsies would then willingly give up the details of their language to these outsiders. See, for example, Leland (1874).
82 Leland (1874), pp. 174–175.
83 Gypsyism was described by Simson as 'a kind of Masonic society' ([1866?], p. 12). The Simsons believed that the settled and concealed element of the Gypsies was far larger than the nomadic section and included among its number such persons of eminence as John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress.*
84 Leland (1874), pp. 2–3.
85 'Gipsies', *Eliza Cook's Journal,* Vol. 10, 1854, pp. 30–32.
86 R. Jefferies, *Field and Hedgerow,* quoted in E.O. Winstedt, 'Gypsy civilisation', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1908, p. 347. See also Willems (1997), p. 152; George K. Behlmer, 'The Gypsy problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 2, Winter 1985, p. 237.
87 A. Symons, 'In praise of Gypsies', p. 296; see also Smart and Crofton (1875), p. xvi. Similarly, Vernon Morwood (1885) noted that 'they scorn the fetters of civilisation, and revel in delight in wild freedom' (p. 7) and refuse to wear 'the bonds imposed by the crushing organisation of society' (p. 87).
88 Cuttriss (1915), p. 81.
89 Bercovici (1929), p. 15.
90 Leland (1874), pp. 7, 8, 17. It is interesting to note the use of the word 'specimen', making the Gypsy part of a scientific experiment.
91 Morwood (1885), p. 3.

92 Yoors (1967). This first sentence in his book immediately conveys the notions of race, strangeness, us/them, apartness.
93 See, for example, Morwood (1867); 'Gipsies', *Eliza Cook's Journal,* Vol. 10, 1854, pp. 30–32.
94 'The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, p. 87.
95 'Gipsies', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* Vol. xlix, January–June 1866, p. 565.
96 'Gipsies', *Family Herald,* Vol. 59, 1887, p. 173.
97 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', 1912, p. 72.
98 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', TS, p. 2. Similar expressions can be found from more recent texts. For example, '[o]n the whole the Gypsies have not changed much since they appeared in Western Europe in 1417' (Tilford, 1946, p. 82). See also Harriot, 'Observations on the Oriental origin', pp. 518–558.
99 Dr H. Arnold, 'The Gypsy gene', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. xl, Nos. 1–2, 1961, p. 53. Translated from the German by A.M. Fraser.
100 *Ibid.,* pp. 54–55.
101 Arthur Thesleff, 'Report on the Gypsy problem', p. 84.
102 See T.W. Thompson, 'The social polity of the English Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1923, pp. 113–139. Thompson concludes: 'The Gypsies were originally a matrilineal people practising matrilocal marriage, either fully or partially, and that they had a definite leaning towards marriage with near kindred' (p. 138).
103 E.O. Winstedt, 'Notes and Queries No 55: Inverto Boswell again', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1912–1913, p. 336. He partly based this conclusion on the fact that the legislation of the sixteenth century directed against those found consorting with the Gypsies must have been so because it actually took place, and, presumably, because consorting with them led to intermarriage or sexual relations.
104 W.H.R. Rivers, 'Notes on the Heron pedigree collected by the Rev George Hall', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1913–1914, p. 92. Hall himself recognised that endogamy was in the 'far-off past'. However, Rivers also conceded, revealingly, that the investigation into pedigrees, and so any conclusions which might be drawn, was flawed and far from accurate. See Rev. G. Hall, 'Preface to the Heron pedigree', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1913–1914, p. 84.
105 Macfie, 'Gypsy lore', p. 103.
106 Simson ([1866?]).
107 This quotation is taken from the first sentence of the book.
108 James Simson informed the reader that 'Gipsydom is natural…it is founded upon a question of race – a question of blood' (Simson [1866?], p. 387) and that '[o]ne drop of blood makes all Gipsydom akin' (p. 425). See also, for a further expression of the same sentiment, pp. 371–398. Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald also believed that 'even a small drop of Romani blood in the veins is sufficient to colour a whole life'. See B. Vesey-Fitzgerald, *Gypsies of Britain: An Introduction to their History* (London, 1951), p. 2.
109 Simson ([1866?]), p. 499.
110 *Ibid.,* pp. 505, 508.
111 Printed circular notice from James Simson, New York, 18 June 1888, 'The Edinburgh Gipsy Lore Society', Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.1. This circular also accused the Gypsy Lore Society of ignoring his book.

112 'The aged Gipsy of Agar Ttown', *Missing Link Magazine,* Vol. 11,2 October 1865, pp. 261–262.
113 Rev. T.W. Norwood, *On the Race and Language of Gipsies,* Report of the Twenty-eighth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, held in Leeds in September 1858 (London, 1859), p. 195.
114 A. Symons, 'Two portraits', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1913–1914, p. 4.
115 E.O. Winstedt, 'Notes and Queries No. 55: Inverto Boswell again', p. 335.
116 See Macfie, 'Gypsies at home', TS.
117 R.E. Chatfield, 'The English Gipsies', *Theosophical Review,* April 1899, p. 108.
118 Morwood (1885), p. 93.
119 C.G. Leland, *The Gypsies* (Boston and New York, 1882), pp. 14–15. Much of the book relies on dialogue and anecdote, though usually set in picturesque locations. An evident rural romanticism pervades the entire work and surprisingly little of substance is said about the people.
120 Rev. G. Hall, 'To Brough Hill fair and back', *Romanitshels', Didakais' and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 1, No. 4, July–October 1912, p. 136.
121 Rev. S.B. James, 'English Gipsies: a monograph in five chapters', *Church of England and Lambeth Magazine,* No. 2329, 21 August 1875, p. 100; see also Rev. G. Hall, 'The Gypsies of England', *Sunday at home,* April 1912, pp. 413–419, where he describes an encounter with the Boswell family amid scenes of sunshine, corn pastures, opening buds, gorse and blackthorn bushes, camp fires and grazing ponies; see also 'In Surrey', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* Vol. lxv, No. ccclxxxix, October 1882, pp. 649–664; 'Gipsies in Hainault Forest', *The Outlook,* 20 August 1898, p. 76; Morwood (1870). For later examples, see the articles in *The Countryman* in the 1950s. See also Cuttriss (1915), who provides a background to his descriptions of the people by setting up a picture of camp fires, summer sunsets, winding rivers and general tranquillity.
122 'The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, pp. 88.
123 Letter from Rev. George Hall to Canon Bartlett, 10 September 1908, GLS, B2 (38).
124 Hall (1894), p. 3.
125 Hall, 'The Gypsies of England'; also, for the idea of the pure-bred Gypsy, see Chatfield, 'The English Gypsies'.
126 Macfie, 'The Gypsies', TS, 1912, pp. 2–3.
127 See 'The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, pp. 86–91.
128 S.L. Bensusan, 'How the other half lives: the Gypsy', *English Illustrated Magazine,* Vol. 17, 1897, p. 646.
129 Scoto-Montanus, 'Gypsies in England', *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,* Vol. 7, 3rd Series, 1828, pp. 242–244; see also 'Gossip about Gypsies', *Leisure Hour,* Vol. 10, 1861, pp. 430–432, 446–448, 462–464.
130 See A.M. Fraser, 'Gypsies as Child-Stealers', TS, 24 July 1966, Scott Macfie Collection GLS, MS39.10. Fraser notes that the accusation of child-stealing was a common theme in European literature, from la Gitanilla of Cervantes to the novels of Henri Bosco. See also François de Vaux de Foletier, 'Tsiganes voleurs d'enfants?', *La Revue de Paris,* July–August 1966, pp. 95–102. See also 'Gipsydom', *Bow Bells,* Vol. 5, 1867, p. 275. Gypsies were again accused of child abduction in the case of a twenty-one-month-old boy who disappeared from the

Greek island of Kos in 1991. This was the subject of a Channel 4 documentary *Cutting Edge.*

131 See Simson ([1866?]).

132 Morwood (1885), pp. 203, 326.

133 These negative sentiments were not restricted to those who, for one reason or another, were antipathetic to the Gypsies and their way of life, and can be found in the works of some of the Gypsy lorists, including Charles Godfrey Leland. See his *The English Gipsies* (1874), pp. 10–13, 21–22.

134 Kay Henwood, *Secrets of the Gypsies* (London, 1974).

135 See, for example, Trigg, 'Magic and religion' and *Gypsy Demons and Divinities;* VeseyFitzgerald (1951); G.E.C. Webb, *Gypsies. The Secret People* (London, 1960); C. Duff, *A Mysterious People: An Introduction to the Gypsies* (London, 1965); John Seymour, 'Gypsies', *Listener,* 6 February 1969, pp. 168–170.

136 Light operas dealing with Romany life include Herbert's *Fortune Teller,* Strauss's *Zigeuner Baron,* and Balfe's *Bohemian Girl,* and serious operas include Bizet's *Carmen,* Thomas' *Mignon,* Verdi's Il *Trovatore* and Mérimée's *Carmen.*

137 A typical film representation of the doe-eyed Gypsy wench can be seen in Joseph Losey's 1957 film *The Gypsy and the Gentleman.*

138 D.H. Lawrence, *The Virgin and the Gypsy* (Florence, 1930); see also Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering, or, The Astrologer* (Edinburgh, 1815) for the character Meg Merrilies, who 'possesses some of the exotic, mysterious, and terrifying qualities later to be associated with Gypsy characters; she even possesses a kind of wild nobility'. (Tilford, 1946, p. 85). See also G.P.R. James, *The Gipsy, a Tale* (Paris, 1835); William Harrison Ainsworth, *Rookwood, a Romance* (London, 1834).

139 D.H. Lawrence, *The Virgin and the Gypsy,* quoted in E. Davies, 'Defining a Gypsy', Gypsy Sites Branch, Department of the Environment, September 1984.

140 John Buchan, *John Burnet of Barns, a Romance* (London, 1898), pp. 220–221. I am grateful to Dr Lisa Hopkins of the English Department at Sheffield Hallam University for this reference.

141 Tilford (1946), p. 86. See Bulwer Lytton, *The Disowned* (Leipzig, 1842); Captain Marryat, *Japhet in Search of a Father* (Leipzig, 1843); George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss* (Leipzig, 1860) and *The Spanish Gypsy* (New York, 1868), where Gypsies are described as '[a] race that lives on prey as foxes do with stealthy, petty rapine' (p. 90); Jane Austen, *Emma: A Novel* (London, 1816); Charles Reade, *Cloister and the Hearth: A Tale of the Middle Ages* (Leipzig, 1864); George Meredith, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (London, 1887); Lady Elinor Smith's novels include *Red Wagon* (1930), *Flamenco* (1931), *Spanish House* (1938) and *Caravan* (1943). I am grateful to Dr Lisa Hopkins of the English Department at Sheffield Hallam University for several of these references.

142 Tilford (1946), p. 85. See also Angus Fraser, 'Authors' Gypsies', *Antiquarian Book,* February 1993, pp. 10–17; F.H. Groome, 'Gypsies', *Chambers' Encyclopaedia,* Vol. 5, 1893, pp. 485–490.

143 'The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, pp. 86–91.

144 Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones* (1st edn, 1749; Harmondsworth, 1966), pp. 593ff.

145 Theodore Watts-Dunton, *Aylwin* (Toronto, 1898); Konrad Bercovici, *Ghitza, and other Romances of Gypsy Blood* (1921) and *Singing Winds: Stories of Gypsy Life* (London, 1926); Walter Starkie's novels include *Raggle-Taggle, Adventures with a*

Fiddle in Hungary and Roumania (London, 1933), *Spanish Raggle-Taggle, Adventures with a Fiddle in North Spain* (London, 1934), and *Don Gypsy: Adventures with a Fiddle in Barbary, Andalusia and La Mancha (l937).*

146 Roberston Davies, *The Deptford Trilogy* (Harmondsworth, 1987). The extract is taken from *Fifth Business,* the first part of the trilogy, p. 236.

147 Angus Fraser, 'John Clare's Gypsies', *Northamptonshire Past and Present. Journal of the Northamptonshire Record Society,* Vol. 4, No. 5, 1970–1971, pp. 259–267. Interestingly, Tilford (1946, p. 86) notes that in other poems the Gypsy is given 'idealised gorgio qualities', for example in Longfellow's *Spanish Student* (1843), George Eliot's *Spanish Gypsy* (1868), Emerson's *Romany Girl* (1857) and Matthew Arnold's *Scholar Gypsy* (1853).

148 The Reverend George Hall came across a playbill in a tavern advertising a travelling theatre production of 'Gipsy Jack', with images of gaily dressed Gypsies camped in forest glades. See Hall (1894), p. 103.

149 Augustus John, *Chiaroscuro: Fragments of Autobiography: First Series* (London, 1952), p. 58. Unfortunately this volume of autobiography contains only very brief mention of John's fascination with the Gypsies and is mostly concerned with the literary and artistic world and travels abroad.

150 Juliette de Bairacli-Levy, 'An artist of the Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. xlix, Nos. 3–4, July–October 1970, pp. 81–83.

151 Francis Wheatley's *Gypsy Encampment,* a late eighteenth-century painting, can be seen in the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery. See Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992). For comment on the 'picturesque' school, see David Smith, typescript of a talk for Traveller Education. This paper also refers to two portraits of the Heron family drawn by Miss Louisa Wilson of Rauceby Hall, near Cranwell, Lincolnshire, dated 1820. I am grateful to David Smith for providing me with a copy of this paper.

152 Morwood (1867), p. 503; Roumany Rei [T. Taylor], 'Gypsey Experiences', *Illustrated London News,* 29 November 1851, p. 655; Leland (1874), p. 6.

153 Rev. S.B. James, 'English Gipsies', *Church of England Magazine,* 1975, p. 100; see also C. Stein, 'Our Gypsy visitors', *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes,* Vol. 70, 1898, pp. 17–23: 'Wherever they are…they have the same type of feature and physical appearance' (p. 20); 'The features of the gipsy are easily recognised; wherever he is seen, and in whatever land he is found, the same character is given of him' (W., 'The Gipsies', *The Revivalist,* 1837, p. 294). See also 'The children of mystery', *All the Year Round,* 28 August 1886, pp. 86–91.

154 Lucas (1880), p. 580.

155 Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science* (London, 1995), pp. 185–186.

156 An example from 1942 is Frederick Cowles, 'Studies of British and Foreign Gypsies: No. 4: Nelson Harris: a Gypsy philosopher', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 21, Nos. 1–2, January–April 1942, pp. 55–61.

157 Charles Duff in the appendix to the 1963 translation of Jean-Paul Clébert, *The Gypsies* (Harmondsworth, 1967).

158 Behlmer, 'The Gypsy problem', pp. 231–252.

Plates 1–4: Woodcuts of Gypsies in early modern Britain

This woodcut was used by Andrew Boorde for his chapter on Egypt and the Egyptians in the 1547 publication *The First Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge made by Andrew Borde, of Physycke doctor: A compendious regiment. Or, a dietary of helth made in Mountpyllier.* It was also used, in the first edition of the book, to illustrate the chapter on 'Bion and Gascony' and, in the second edition, for the chapters on 'Saxsony and Spayne'.

Source: **H.T.** Crofton, 'Borde's Egipt Speche', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* Vol. l, No. 2, 1907, p. 165.

Plate 2

Plate 3

Plates 2 and 3 were reproduced in *The Roxburghe Ballads, with short notes by W Chappell, and copies of the original woodcuts, etc.* 9 vols (London, 1869) and in G. Salgādo, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (Gloucester, 1984, 1st edn, 1977).

Source: **H.T.** Crofton, 'The former costume of the Gypsies', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* Vol. 2, No. 3, 1909, pp.207–231.

Plate 4

This woodcut can also be found in Douce's illustrated copy of Matthew Raper's translation of H. Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies, being an Historical Enquiry, concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, Customs and Conditions of these people in Europe, and their Origin.* (London, 1807).

Source: **H.T.** Crofton, 'The former costume of the Gypsies', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* Vol. 2, No. 3, 1909, pp.207–231.

Plate 5: Etching print of a rural scene, c. 1790. Possibly by J.C. Ibbotson

Source: Scott Macfie Collection, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

Plate 6: 'Dr Syntax and the Gypsies'

One of a series of aquatints by Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827), famous satirist and caricaturist, chronicling the tours and escapades of the fictional nineteenth-century English clergyman Dr Syntax. The etching, dating from around 1812–1821, shows typical images of fortune telling, children, dogs, the fire and cooking pot, and of one gentleman being suggestively tickled under the chin by a Gypsy girl.

Source: Gypsy Pictures, Vol. 2, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

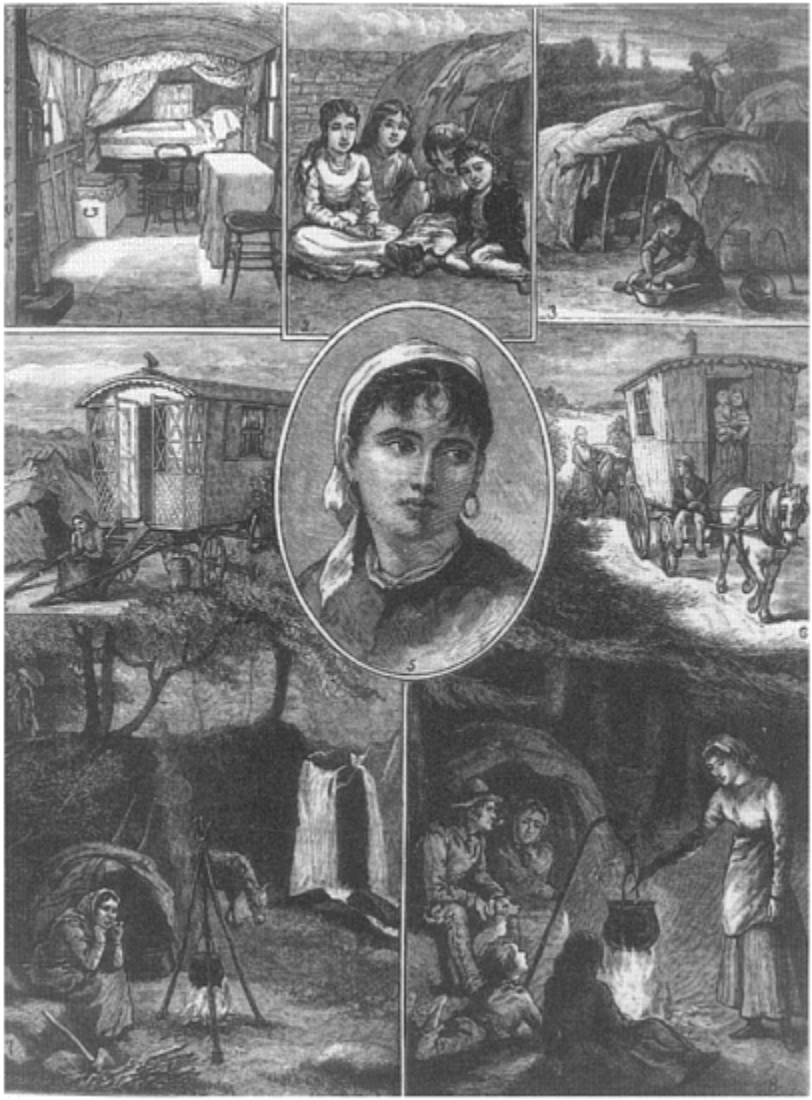

Plate 7:*'Among the Gipsies'*

These various images of Gypsies were taken from *The Graphic,* 13 March 1880, p. 276 presenting a romanticised and common image of the rural Gypsy way of life.

Source: Gypsy Cuttings, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library University of Liverpool.

Plate 8: 'Gipsy Life as it is'

These images were taken from *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News,* 1 March 1884. These thirteen drawings, with their images of sickness, poverty, destitution, immorality and promiscuity in the form of an unmarried parent, contrast sharply with the images in Plate 7. They also show a visit to the encampments by George Smith of Coalville, a noted nineteenth-century philanthropist and reformer.

Source: Gypsy Cuttings Special Collections Library, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

Plate 9: 'The Gipsey's Tent Quadrilles!'

The association of Gypsies and music has a long history dating back to the earliest records of their migrations from India, and many of the representations of the group made use of their supposed musical abilities. This typical illustration of a rural encampment, dancing and music is taken from the title page of the sheet music for 'The Gipsey's Tent Quadrilles!', composed and arranged by John P. Barratt. Even though the Gypsies were not, in this instance, the musicians or composer, the title and the cover art exploited this link.

Source: Gypsy Music, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

Plate 10 and 11: Gypsiologists of the Gypsy Lore Society.

This photograph shows the noted Gypsy lorists John Sampson (standing) and possibly Dora Yates (seated) next to B. Gilliat-Smith with Gypsies Rose and Mary Lizzie Griffiths. This studio portrait attempted to reproduce the rural and romantic theme with the rustic seat and classical backcloth.

Source: Gypsiologist photos, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

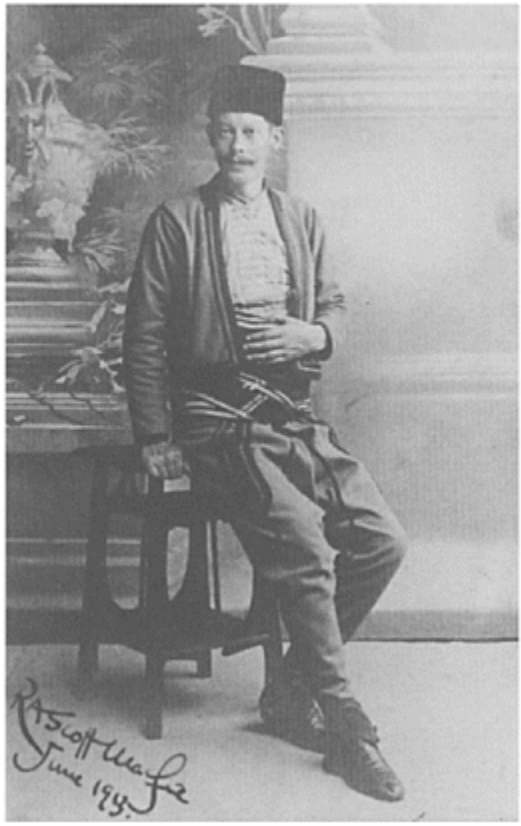

Plate 11

Robert Scott Macfie dressed in Bulgarian Gypsy costume, which, it is alleged, was made for him by tailors in Savile Row, London.

Source: Gypsiologist photos, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool.

Plate 12: 'Gypsies and Gentiles'

This illustration by John Garside is of a Gypsy looking meaningfully at a distant church, dwarfed underneath a sign outlawing rogues and vagabonds.

Source: John Sampson, *The Wind on the Heath. A Gypsy Anthology* (London, 1930).

Plate 13: 'Gypsies and Fishing'

This illustration by Arthur Rackham shows a band of foreign-looking Gypsies, and inevitable dog, interrupting the contemplative man at his peaceful leisure.

Source: Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler. Or the contemplative man's recreation* (London, 1931; first edn. 1653), pp. 116–7.

Plate 14: 'Bruce Kent invites you to spot the clue'

This comic strip shows the detective Bruce Kent investigating the case of the missing gold vase. A Gypsy, who had been allowed to camp on the estate of the landowner, was the offender.

Source: The Lion, 6 September 1958.

Plate 15: 'The Nice Honest Gypsies'

This cartoon appeared in Issue 44, of *Viz,* the satirical magazine. The same issue also included a comic strip of 'The Thieving Gypsy Bastards'. Following a complaint about the latter, an apology was printed and the magazine undertook not to reproduce the strip or allow it to be reproduced.

Source: Viz, Issue 44, October/November 1990.

Plates 16 and 17: Participants at the Leiden University Conference, 1990.

This photograph of contemporary Gypsy scholars attending a conference at Leiden University, the Netherlands, inSeptember 1990 was taken by Wim Willems (inset). Left to right: David Mayall, Moris Farhi (seated), Annemarie Cottaar, Leo Lucassen, Ian Hancock, Thomas Acton, Harm Beukers (organiser), Eva Strauss and Judith Okely.

Source: I am grateful to Wim Willems for permission to reproduce this photograph.

6
The origins of the real Romany
From Heinrich Grellmann to the Gypsy lorists

Although the image of the separate and distinctive Gypsy race has appeared in an enormous variety of texts over an extremely long historical period, the origins of this particular definition and representation of the group can be identified in the writings of key individuals whose work, for a combination of reasons, gave scholarly legitimacy to the racial perspective. Unsurprisingly, the appearance of the racial Gypsy coincides with, and develops alongside, the emergence and growth of the concept of race, as discussed previously The chronological starting point for this chapter is, then, the late eighteenth century and the treatise on Gypsies by the German scholar Heinrich Grellmann. In the English context, and following the English translation and publication of his text, we next see ideas about the racial Gypsy appearing in the works of the Christian reformers of the early nineteenth century and the works of the well-known writer George Borrow. Other miscellaneous individuals then also became fascinated by the group, and by 1888 many had formed themselves into the Gypsy Lore Society, an umbrella organisation for Gypsy lorists and Romany Rais the world over.[1] The importance of these individuals and groups rests in the fact that, although the notion of the racial Gypsy may have been born in the late eighteenth century and nurtured through the nineteenth century in various studies and publications, the core ideas have lived on, and arguably continue to thrive, into the twenty-first century.

Heinrich Grellmann (1753–1804)

It was not until the publication of Heinrich Grellmann's influential treatise that we can see evidence of systematic and detailed research, which developed into the first unambiguous statement of the Gypsies' racial identity.[2] His classic text, translated into English in 1787, is said to have caused an 'epidemic' of interest in the Gypsies, and throughout the nineteenth century his study was used as a standard and definitive reference work by a wide range of writers on Gypsy matters, with many authors reproducing unashamedly sizeable verbatim sections from the original in their own publications.[3] His work influenced early nineteenth-century definitions and representations of the group, incorporated features from the earlier accounts of the Egyptians and informed the later researches of the Gypsy lorists.

Grellmann left little room for doubt as to the Gypsies' origin, identity and character. The large second edition of his treatise was concerned with dispelling the Egyptian and other speculative theories of origins and replacing them with his own suggestion that Gypsies originated from the lowest caste of Indians, known as 'Pariahs' or 'Suders', from the region of 'Hindostan'. His argument was based primarily on a comparison of the Gypsy and Hindostanee languages, establishing a philological approach which became the keynote of the later definitions of the Gypsy lorists. He supplemented the linguistic argument by also identifying perceived similarities between the Suder caste and the Gypsies in respect of their complexion and shape, their timorous and cowardly character, their loquaciousness, their preference for intermarriage within the tribe, their pursuit of similar trades and, finally, their fondness for saffron.[4] Grellmann argued that the Gypsies maintained their identity throughout their travels, and that 'they have remained, to the present time, what they were at their first arrival in Europe'. He stated further that neither time, climate nor example made any impression on the Gypsies and that their Indian origins stayed visible throughout the centuries.[5] From this basis he proceeded to identify the group by descriptions of both visible and invisible features, from skin colour and dress to attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and capabilities.

Emphasis was given to their nomadism, distinguishing physical characteristics (dark brown or olive-coloured skin, white teeth, red lips, long black hair and black eyes) and character. Grellmann lingered on this latter aspect in particular and provided a comprehensive and damning list of behavioural and attitudinal features which were said to define the essence of the Gypsy people. They were described as idle, preferring hunger and nakedness to labour, deceitful (in which they were surpassed only by the Jews), and as thieves, murderers and incendiaries. They were considered childish, guided more by sense than reason, fickle, faithless, inconstant and void of the least emotion of gratitude. Although his own sense of decency prevented him from providing the details, he portrayed the Gypsy women as unchecked by any idea of shame and 'trained for an offering to sensuality'.[6]

By means of descriptions based around notions of fixed cultural and behavioural features, common origin and phenotypical distinctiveness, Grellmann had tightened the boundaries around the group. The Gypsies were now categorically identified as a 'race', a term used by Grellmann in the text of his study and possibly the first example of its use in English in relation to the Gypsy people.

The impact of this work, by a recent graduate of the University of Jena who was still only thirty years of age, could not have been anticipated. Grellmann's treatise was not a work of great scholarship or originality, and yet its influence was immediately and powerfully felt and there can be little doubt that it stimulated interest in the group throughout Europe on an unprecedented scale.[7] Grellmann provided the essential framework and indicated the parameters of enquiry for subsequent Gypsy studies. As Willems notes, 'Grellmann set the tone for the

following two centuries'.[8] In England the first evidence and example of this can be found in the activities and publications of the early nineteenthcentury missionary and evangelical movement.

Gypsies and the missionary and evangelical movement

Early nineteenth-century Christianity reacted with vigour to the dangers of advancing industrialism and rationalism, hoping not only to hold on to existing believers through fiery pulpit sermonising, but more aggressively by leaving the churches and chapels to seek out those who were ignorant and indifferent about religion and so ripe for reform and conversion. Travel and colonialism had opened up whole continents of such people, but much closer to home were the Gypsies. Much of the published writing on Gypsies from the early 1800s to the middle of the nineteenth century thus grew out of the contemporary missionary and evangelical zeal to first understand and then reform this group of itinerants who flaunted their heathenism on the domestic shores. The missionaries and evangelists found no shortage of avenues for their ideas and public works to be advertised and brought to the attention of a largely middle-class, literate public sharing the Christian zeal for the reform of the soulless and degraded hordes. Many articles on the Gypsies were published in such journals as the *Christian Observer, Church of England Magazine, Home Missionary Society Magazine,* the *Christian Herald,* the *Scottish Christian Herald,* and the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,* and a range of individual and organised initiatives emerged from the early nineteenth century on which were explicitly aimed at the 'reformation' of the group.[9]

For some the desire for reform was expressed as a condemnation of the people, a statement of intent and a plea for action, but for others preliminary research and investigation were the prelude to practical and spiritual measures designed to reclaim the Gypsies to the ways of civilised society The missionaries to the Gypsies were inspired by a combination of motives: a desire to combat heathenism at home and a genuine wish to improve the lot of an impoverished and persecuted people. The belief in many people's minds that the Gypsies were so beyond recall or redemption that any attempt at reform was doomed to fail seems to have inspired the missionaries to action: if they could show that even the Gypsies could be brought back from the brink then anyone could be saved. 'None are so deeply fallen that they may not be lifted up', wrote a contributor to the *Weekly Record of the Temperance Movement* in 1861.[10] The pioneer reformers of the Gypsies were the first to apply Grellmann's treatise to the British experience and their writings comprise some of the earliest full-length monographs on the English Gypsy experience.

In 1815 the Society of Friends delegated one of their members, John Hoyland, to enquire into the plight of the Gypsies with a view to their reform and conversion. The resultant survey, published in 1816, was the first serious study of Gypsies in which Grellmann's representation of continental Gypsies was

tested against the English experience. Hoyland's debt to Grellmann is indicated in the title of his study, which closely mirrors that of the German scholar's 1787 treatise.[11] Hoyland's method was personal observation combined with a questionnaire sent out to other individuals concerned about the 'Gypsy question'. Hoyland concluded that Grellmann's observations were correct, agreeing with the theory of Indian origins and sharing a belief in the unchanging nature and character of the people. The Gypsies were presented as a separate and distinct group who had avoided mixing with the host society, whether through intermarriage, acculturation or the transmission of ideas.

Hoyland repeated the condemnation of their way of life that appeared in Grellmann's work, describing them as 'filthy and disgusting', 'depraved and fraudulent to excess'. His attitude was typical of the growing evangelical concern over the 'Gypsy problem' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which presented the Gypsies as a race desperately in need of being rescued from their wayward, amoral and irreligious lives and of being assimilated into respectable and settled society To define them as a separate race and to attribute negative characteristics to the group was not to deny the possibility of reform. While physical features were fixed, their alleged depravity, immorality and heathenism were not. Instead these were seen not as the permanent and inevitable consequences of their separate racial origins but as a product of their nomadism: redemption by settlement was the solution.

The Reverend James Crabb had previously worked among the poor and prostitutes of Southampton before turning his attentions to another community who seemingly lived in ignorance of God, devoid of the benefits of a civilised and respectable life. Crabb combined a debt to the works of Grellmann and Hoyland with his own personal observations and experiences. Crabb was remarkably free of the anti-Gypsy prejudices of the time, believing the Gypsy to be falsely accused and unjustly treated. He consciously decided against writing about their fortune telling and other criminal activities as one of his main aims was 'to solicit a better feeling towards them', and in so doing he was taking one of the earliest and important steps towards the more positive representation of the Gypsies as a race.[12]

His main concern, though, was with reforming what he saw as their unhappy mode of life and heathen ways. His attempts at reform have been discussed elsewhere[13] and of more relevance to the present study was his portrayal of the group as a race of Hindostanee or Suder origin, following Grellmann and Hoyland. In the first chapter of his book *The Gipsies' Advocate, Crabb* discussed the origins of the group and established his version of the 'real Gipsy'. He set out the range of criteria which would identify the true Gypsy from the false: 'a countenance, eye, mouth, hands, ancle *[sic],* and quickness of manners', delight in horses, tinkering, music and fortune telling, the wandering trait and a distinct language. Moreover, these features not only distinguished the true Gypsy but they also confirmed the theory of Indian origins as each of these characteristics was also said to be found among the Hindoo and Suder tribes.

Crabb then followed this by identifying the alleged distinctive character, manner and habits of the English Gypsies. Their skin was described as being of a tawny colour, though this was not an inherited trait but one caused by their disregard for washing and personal cleanliness and their exposure to alternate cold, heat and smoke from their fires. The women were said to be fond of finery, and to wear large earrings and glaring colours.[14]

Concern was occasionally expressed that the background, motives and aims of the Christian reformers could hardly result in accurate or impartial investigation and so was likely to distort their representation of the group.[15] Even so, their works had a wide impact by reaching a broad audience. Local newspapers eagerly reported the activities of James Crabb and the Southampton Committee, their books received favourable reviews, and there was no end of writers for miscellaneous improving journals who reviewed, borrowed and reproduced their ideas.[16]

George Borrow (1803–1881) and the 'very essence of Gypsydom'[17]

George Borrow is undeniably the most famous of all the nineteenth-century Gypsiologists, known to a wide and varied audience through such works as *Lavengro, the Romany Rye* and *Romano-Lavo Lil.*[18] His books are frequently cited as key sources and are to be found in the bibliographies of most of the major nineteenth-century texts on the group. Borrow achieved the status of an expert on Gypsy matters and is widely believed to have acted as an inspiration to a wide range of Gypsiologists. Dora Yates, in her memoirs of her time as a Romani Rawnie, noted:

> The first question asked of every Romani Rye and every Romani Rawnie is always what turned his or her interests to the Gypsies. And in five cases out of six the invariable answer is: 'Reading the work of George Borrow'.[19]

Borrow's influence is also said to have extended well beyond the select group of Gypsiologists and is thought to have brought the cult of Gypsyism into widespread popularity, and to have provided an insight into Gypsydom which could not be obtained from the dry philological works of writers such as Pott.[20] Following in the well-established tradition of rogue literature, Borrow is said to have intrigued the reader with his tales of the Gypsies, criminal adventures, exciting anecdotes and insights into an unknown, mysterious and even magical world. Further, it is claimed that he was the prime inspiration for the development of the folklorist side of Gypsy studies and that he had a 'profound effect' on how the group came to be seen and understood.[21] His admirers write of his 'beautiful descriptions' of the picturesque Gypsy and of his 'infectious enthusiasm' for his subject, which 'awakens in the hearts of even staid, respectable

readers a dangerous longing for the freedom of the wilds'.[22] Borrow's mantle as the authority on Gypsy life and language, the 'walking lord of Gypsy lore' as he was hailed in a contemporary poem, was not taken from him until the emergence of the Gypsy lorists in the late nineteenth century and their more rigorous, although hardly faultless, approach to researching the group.

This, however, is where agreement seems to end. His biographers and other commentators differ widely on the man and his character, the quality of his publications and the extent to which they reveal the 'true Gypsy'. He is described by one biographer, Seton Dearden, as a 'supreme egotist', as a tragic and lonely figure, and as wholly out of contact 'with the life and thought of his time'.[23] Dearden locates Borrow's mental instability and 'deep sense of personal inferi ority' in a 'physical anomaly that would be sufficient to shake the mental fabric of any man', compounded by parental attitudes and humiliations at school.[24] Borrow is presented as a very troubled and deeply disturbed boy and man, and in this can be found one explanation for his attraction to the outcast Gypsy, using them as a means of escape into a fantasy world.[25]

Borrow has also been presented, more favourably, as the 'good-hearted, virtuous adventurer', and as amazing, charming and full of bravado.[26] His spirited nature found an echo and a home with the Gypsies and their picaresque lifestyle. Borrow was drawn to them because they were like-minded romantic wanderers and because they were also a people desperately in need of the spiritual enlightenment he endeavoured to offer. The attraction started early in his life and lasted through most of his adult years:

> They excited his curiosity, he envied their mode of life, admired their clannishness, delighted in their primitive customs. Their persistence in warring against the gentile appealed strongly to his instinctive hatred of 'gentility nonsense'; and perhaps more than anything else he envied them the stars and the sun and the wind on the heath.[27]

Borrow was one of the earliest writers on Gypsies, English and foreign, to engage in sustained fieldwork, going one step beyond the more occasional contact of, for example, the early nineteenth-century missionaries. Wim Willems, in a paper presented to a meeting of the George Borrow Society in 1993, remarked:

> What we can state positively is that Borrow was probably the first author who actually met gypsy-groups in different countries, took the trouble to learn their language, talked with them for many hours, and wrote down his impressions.[28]

Although Borrow had some personal contact with British Gypsies in his native Norfolk, and in the camps at Wandsworth, the Potteries and Kirk Yetholm, his most sustained period of contact came from his experiences in Russia and Spain

when employed as a representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society between 1833 and 1840.[29] His experience of the group, at home and abroad, gave to his writings a very distinctive character, combining a thinly veiled spiritual rather than factual autobiography with firsthand observations. This method of having personal contact with the Gypsies, and even in some instances befriending them, was common to many writers after Borrow and seems as important to the psychology of researching the group as it was to the processes of obtaining direct information. It was even commented that Borrow relied more on this method than any other, and one of his many biographers remarked, in a phrase that can also be read in a less than flattering light as regards the rigour of Borrow's researches, that 'his knowledge of the Romany people was not acquired from books. Apparently he had read very few of the many works dealing with this mysterious race.'[30] His personal contacts and experience served to elevate his work to a point where 'many took him extremely seriously as philologist, folklorist and ethnologist'.[31]

The impression obtained from Borrow, and indeed from other Gypsy lorists, is of his being fully accepted by the Gypsy group, both in England and abroad. There is no indication of any hostility to his presence or of a reluctance to provide him with the information he sought. Borrow believed that by offering cigarettes, tobacco and money, and by living and sharing their lifestyle, he was accorded privileged access to the group. A typescript note in the Gypsy Lore Society archive at Liverpool offers a perspective on the relationship from the Gypsy side. Writing to Dora Yates, a member of the Boswell family remarked that Borrow was considered dishonest and as causing annoyance and offence by publishing stories which had been told him in confidence.[32] Similarly, Silvester Gordon Boswell, grandson of Wester (1811–1890), one of Boswell's original informants, has written:

> Mr Borrow was not always told the truth in return for his half ounce of twist, and there was many a good laugh at his expense after he had left a Gypsy family seated around a stick fire.[33]

Among this family at least, the friendship and trust which had been established had long since been lost, and the idea that Borrow was regarded by the Gypsies as practically one of themselves contains more than a hint of romanticisation. Also, while offering payment of some kind for information is certainly a legitimate and common practice, this is not the romantic image of the Romany Rai who befriended the Gypsies, found their confidence and was given privileged access to their secrets. The relationship was more a commercial transaction than a meeting of intimates.

The Zincali; or, An Account of the Gypsies in Spain. With an original collection of their Songs and Poetry, and a copious Dictionary of their Language (1841) was his first major text with a Gypsy theme. In a pattern that was to be followed by his later works, this did not sell well and was criticised at the time

for its many inaccuracies. His next work, *The Bible in Spain* (1843), pushed him 'into the front ranks of England's leading writers', and with its numerous cheap editions it became 'one of the best-selling books in Great Britain in the middle of the previous century'.[34] Although the subject matter was much the same as in *The Zincali,* this time it was presented more as a Christian chronicle, permitting the picaresque while not glorifying it. However, it was his two subsequent books which established him as a scholar of the English Gypsies, despite their poor reception. *Lavengro; the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* (1851) was largely based around two key Gypsy figures, Jasper Petulengro, based on his friend Ambrose Smith, and Isobel Berners.[35] The book was attacked vigorously by the critics and Jenkins explains the book's 'failure' thus:

> Borrow's was an age of gentility and refinement, and he outraged it, first by glorifying vagabondage, secondly by decrying and sneering at gentility.[36]

This view was shared by another biographer, Seton Dearden, who also thought that the book was poorly received because it was badly structured and vague, and also, as it was his third book with a Gypsy theme, his audience was now bored.[37]

The companion volume *Romany Rye: A Sequel to Lavengro* (1857) was also not a great seller.[38] The book, described by Borrow himself as a dream, a drama, a poem and a philological journey,[39] resulted from his desire to tell the spiritual truth of his life rather than to write the more conventional autobiography and travel story expected by his publisher. Such a decision had a large commercial and critical cost. Next in the sequence came *Romano Lavo-Lil,* described by Dearden as 'unreliable and incomplete'. This volume was also condemned by lorists such as Groome for being shallow, and the book was 'coldly reviewed and fell dead from the press'.[40]

The image of the group to be found in Borrow's writings contains most of the features identified previously as being characteristic of the racial perspective: the Gypsies as a single people, unchanging and incapable of change, and sharing morals, customs, language and appearance the world over. The notion of racial purity and blood dilution was another prominent element in his works. He wrote of the way that the ancient race was disappearing and of the need to distinguish between the true Gypsies, real Gypsies or 'people of the sacred black race',[41] and the *chorodies,* the *kora mengre* and the *hindity mengre.*

Borrow provided a clear indication of the differences between the groups, and so built the basis for the later construction of racial hierarchies among the travelling population that were based on notions of blood purity. The *chorodies* were other vagrant people who lived in tents and caravans which were much dirtier than those belonging to the true Gypsies, and who as a people were ferocious, depraved, repulsive, with coarse and vulgar features. The *kora mengre* were itinerant vendors, also coarse and low, with few redeeming features, while

the *hindity mengre,* or 'dirty people', were identifiable by their Irish tinker origins.[42]

For someone seen as the first Romany Rai, or Gypsy gentleman and Gypsy friend, Borrow presented a picture that in many of its aspects showed extreme hostility to the group. He saw them as possessing an unavoidable criminal nature, echoing the racial notion that this, like nomadism, was an inherent and inherited part of their nature. As with nomadism, so with criminality: the Gypsies could no more stop their thieving and cheating ways than they could settle in a house. They were described as being uncivilised, corrupt, immoral, and as being liars, rogues, cheats and vagabonds. Indeed, Borrow was said to be 'aghast at the depravity of those in Spain', and the image provided was of drunkards, brigands, murderers, inveterate thieves and unchaste women.[43] For Borrow, the Spanish Gypsies were 'the most vile, degraded and wretched people upon the earth'.[44] In his negative portrayal of the group, and indeed in his general characterisation of them as a separate and singular people, Borrow stands firmly in an ancestral line going back to Grellmann, and it is not immediately apparent how his writing helped to recast the ways the Gypsies were seen in quite the way suggested earlier.

The images in his books of a real Gypsy race at once both romantic and in need of reform appear convincing by virtue of the minutiae of his observations and his characterisation of Isobel Berners and Jasper Petulengro, both of whom become real people rather than fictional creations. Indeed, one nineteenth-century writer considered the veracity in Borrow's writings to be 'unimpeachable'.[45] Also, as noted by Willems, he did offer insights, not easily obtainable elsewhere at this time, of the social functioning of the Gypsies and their employments. However, Borrow has also been accused of being an impressionist and a romantic, of being careless and inaccurate in his writing, and of changing histories, relationships and circumstances 'when it pleased him to do so'.[46] Although his works are often treated under the Gypsy studies label, it cannot be claimed with any degree of conviction that his works are truly scholarly One of his many biographers, Herbert Jenkins, remarked that Borrow was not a writer of academic books and that 'he lacked the instinct for research which alone insures *[sic]* accuracy'.[47] Rather, his works are a combination of philology, spiritual auto-biography, romantic travel journalism, records of picaresque adventures, and missionary calls for salvation. In this way Borrow was drawing together a number of strands, taking in the early nineteenth-century passion for evangelism and Christian reform, the recent vogue for linguistic study and a fascination with groups living outside mainstream society. The picture that Borrow presented was coloured and impressionistic rather than accurately descriptive. His philological endeavours especially were widely criticised as being based on little more than unscientific guesswork. In one particularly damning, and anonymous, review of his main philological study *Romano Lavo-Lil,* Borrow is accused of not having progressed any further than his works of forty years previously and of being igno-rant of both comparative

philology and the present state of knowledge on the subject.[48] Other contemporary reviews in such periodicals as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *Fraser's Magazine* commented on the clumsy writing, the peculiar structure, tedious passages, disjointedness, the lack of plot and drab verbosity. In 1851 a 'Roumany Rei', the pseudonym of T. Taylor, wrote of Borrow:

> [He] knows the Gypseys well, and could describe them perfectly. But his love of effect leads him away. In his wish to impress his reader with a certain mysterious notion of himself, he colours his Gypsey pictures (the *form* of which is quite accurate) in a fantastic style *which robs them altogether of the value they would have as studies from life* [my emphasis].[49]

For many, his works were seen as virtually unreadable because of their tortuous style and convoluted plot and structure. Contemporaries, including even his own publisher, balked at his dense and highly idiosyncratic style. It is probable that his writing is even less palatable to twentieth-century tastes, the members of the Borrovian Society notwithstanding. Moreover, the veneer of authenticity and accuracy conveyed by the autobiographical style of writing and firsthand knowledge begins to split under examination. Willems drew the following conclusions from a detailed study of his writings:

> he was a naive ethnographer, who never had the intention of doing systematic research on gypsies, and who was like everyone else influenced by the prejudices of his time. His perceptions were very selective and on a general level he only saw what he had learned to see.[50]

More generally he is also said to have deliberately included misleading information in his books.[51] Yet despite these important qualifications to his methodology, and so also to the veracity of the representation being offered, Borrow is still seen by many as having an extraordinary and lasting impact on Gypsy studies.

Borrow, by virtue of the subject matter of his books and his position as an important if not major figure in nineteenth-century literature, occupies a prominent position in the field of Gypsy studies. Undoubtedly anyone coming to the study of Gypsies will have to take account of Borrow's writings, and it is inevitable that he will be cited as a source and appear in bibliographies. Claims about his inspirational qualities and his promotion of the the cult of Gypsyism elevate his status over and above any other single person or factor, and this at the very least needs some critical examination. First, these claims are very difficult to prove as the evidence is at best circumstantial. Certainly he was cited by many of the lorists as an influence, but equally they were also only too ready to criticise and condemn his writings. To proclaim an inspirational and intellectual debt to Borrow, whose works were widely criticised at the time, may have been more harmful than beneficial to a group wanting to establish their scholarly

credentials. While Borrow may certainly have acted as an influence, if not always in a positive sense, it was only as one of many The lorists were more likely for example, to have obtained their objective approach from the sciences of philology and ethnology than Borrow's own endeavours in this field. The stimulus from Borrow was probably more to their (romantic) imaginations than to their scholarly efforts.

The suggestion that Borrow not only influenced the academic side of Gypsy studies but also aroused the interest of a wider audience is also questionable. The number of editions produced and books sold is not necessarily an indication of the number of books read. Although Borrow was probably the best-known nineteenth-century writer on Gypsies, this is not the same as saying that he was the most read, the best liked or the most respected. The view that his works are obscure, irritating and impenetrable is not just a personal opinion but was one expressed at the time. Moreover, this analysis of his contribution to Gypsy studies tends to raise the Gypsy element of his works above all else. The Gypsy component of what were seen as his main Gypsy works was, perhaps surprisingly, very slight, and the general public was possibly as much or more interested in his missionary and travel adventures than in the Gypsies:

> It is strange that Lavengro and The Romany Rye have become so closely associated with the Gypsies, for actually the passages in Lavengro in which they appear amount to no more than one ninth of the book and those in The Romany Rye must be a still smaller fraction of the whole.[52]

In short, there can be a danger that Gypsiologists read his works through their own Gypsy spectacles, distorting the centrality of the group in which they were already interested. Yet we are left with the judgement that his were among the most influential and widely referenced of all nineteenth-century books on Gypsies. In many ways Borrow's reputation, both as a writer and as one of the first Gypsy scholars, is difficult to understand. His books were heavily criticised at the time of their publication and, subsequently, his style is condemned for a wide variety of reasons, the sections on Gypsies are relatively small, and they are factual accounts only in a very limited sense. The solution to this riddle perhaps lies in the mood and feeling evoked in his writing which excited the imagination and offered a glimpse of an unrespectable world, and also, importantly, in the fact that his works appeared at a time when there was still very little else of any substance being produced about the group.

Borrow contributed to the evolution of the racial picture of the Gypsy by acting as a bridge on which both old and new ideas found a place. He combined a distaste for their ways, which echoed the sentiments of Grellmann, with an evangelistic concern for their spiritual welfare, whilst also anticipating the compulsive and romanticised fascination of the group to be found among the emerging Gypsy lorists.

The Gypsy lorists

The 1830s and 1840s witnessed the growth of interest in the study of folklore, revealed in its institutional expression by the emerging learned societies and antiquarian clubs. The folklore movement is considered by its main historian, Richard Dorson, to have peaked in the period from the 1870s, which saw the founding of the Folk Lore Society in 1878, to 1914.[53] Dorson points to both its domestic and colonial roots:

> Their compatriots abroad, who governed colonies, planted missions and travelled the globe, diligently amassed folk-traditions and customs, the better to understand subject peoples and alien cultures.[54]

A further impetus to folklore study came from the belief that old ways and traditions were threatened and displaced by new ways of thinking and behaving brought in by the industrial revolution and the associated economic, political, social and cultural changes. Initially the desire to preserve by recording old ways was the reserve primarily of 'noble patrons and enquiring gentry', gathering folk memories of old customs, beliefs, charms, potions, love-philtres, observances, rituals, rites, legends and amulets.[55] Eventually interest in folklore spread much wider than its elite origins, attracting the attentions of middle-class scholars and soon becoming established as a respectable area for study. This was the epoch of nationalism, and the discovery, or creation, of a national and racial identity was to be found by looking at the traditions, inner lives and habits, the cultural forms and folk characteristics of a people.

Accompanying the popularity and spread of the folklore movement were a number of other contributory factors which explain the timing of the emergence of the Gypsy lorists. In particular, and closely associated with folklore study, was the resurgence of the Romantic movement, with its emphasis on nature, ruralism and freedom, and the popularity of works by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Scott.[56] The connection between the folklore and romantic movements and the study of Gypsies becomes evident as soon as one turns to almost any text written by a Gypsy lorist. Invariably we are informed that the writer had been moved by the spirit of romance, and that this led him or her to seek out the society of Gypsies.[57] Often the lorists themselves acknowledged that their interest in the group was primarily because the whole way of life, attitudes and culture of the Gypsy people were out of step with the times. The Gypsies, for them, were a welcome anachronism and diversion, serving as a romantic symbol in the modern age.[58] By studying the Gypsies the lorists registered their own discomfort with the tightness and strictures of Victorian respectability. The apparent disregard for modern conventions and morality to be found among the Gypsies appealed to the bohemian imaginations of the Gypsy lorists.

By the 1860s and 1870s this vogue for folklore and romanticism, combined with the development of scientific enquiry and classification discussed

previously, all found their way into Gypsy studies through the efforts of a small number of devoted enthusiasts, in England and elsewhere in Europe.[59] The classic texts of folklore study were also the main sources on the early history of Gypsies in England, and many of the articles in the early volumes of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* share with the folklorists a fascination with potions and love-philtres. The 'mild vogue' for Gypsy studies associated with works by such eminent writers and scholars as George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, which succeeded in bringing the group to the attentions of 'respectable' society, was about to take off.[60] Previous concerns about heathenism and (Christian) reform were transformed into a desire to investigate the lore, language and culture of the Gypsy race, and folklore and Gypsy studies moved forward in the same directions, if not always hand in hand.

In turn, the discovery of culture, customs, rituals, ceremonies and rites became the key element in identifying the present-day Gypsy people. The Gypsy lorists combined a faith in the scientific classification of people into races with the folklorist enthusiasm for obscure and disappearing people and ways. They were, for their efforts, primarily responsible for putting the racial definition and imagery on a more scientific and academic footing, leaving an impact on our understanding of the group which is still present today.

The Gypsy Lore Society: early history

The idea of bringing together all those people with an interest in the life and lore of the Gypsies first emerged in 1874 when Charles Godfrey Leland and Edward Palmer (Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University) considered starting a journal for Gypsy matters and inviting George Borrow, the famous writer, and Dr Smart Crofton to join them. However, the idea was not developed further until several years later. By this time Leland had settled in England and his *English Gypsies and their Language* (1873) had brought him to the wider attention of Gypsy enthusiasts in this country, whom he was instrumental in bringing together in an informal grouping which anticipated the later Gypsy Lore Society.[61] The publication of a letter in the journal *Notes and Queries* in 1877 urging interested parties to collect the songs and ballads of Gypsies before they had disappeared for ever provided the stimulus. A reply suggested that a club or corresponding society be formed for this purpose and, from these initial promptings, and under the initiative and leadership of David MacRitchie of Edinburgh, the Gypsy Lore Society was founded in 1888.[62] The society started with just eleven original members, though included in this select number were the Archduke Joseph of Austria, who had conducted experiments for the welfare of his Gypsy subjects, the famous soldier, explorer, travel writer and linguist Sir Richard Burton, and one of the foremost Gypsiologists of the time, Paul Bataillard of Paris. By the end of 1888 the membership of the society had increased to sixty-nine members, most of whom were British, and included most of the existing experts on Gypsies from Britain, Europe and America.[63]

Despite claims that the Gypsy Lore Society was received enthusiastically all over the world, this did not result in funding or sales of the journal, and the society eventually collapsed in 1892 following a period of decline. In 1907 John Sampson and David MacRitchie persuaded the wealthy head of a firm of sugar refiners, Robert Scott Macfie, to revive the society. This proved an inspirational choice, as Macfie, from 1907 until his death in 1935, provided the energy, commitment and, importantly, the finances to keep the society running and, in his capacity as editor of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* even to raise its standards by his meticulous editing and correcting of articles. In the words of Dora Yates, '[h]e not only revived the society but re-created it: indeed, in the opinion of all its members, in his own person he *was* [original emphasis] the Society'.[64] Between 1907 and 1935 Macfie himself wrote 123 separate items on Gypsy lore, most of which were published in the society's journal.[65] Within one year of its revival the society had a membership of over 200, more than double its previous highest figure.[66] Although the society folded again during the war years it re-emerged in Autumn 1921 and was relaunched in 1922 due to the financial support of William Ferguson, the new president. A great part of the work now fell on the shoulders of T.W. Thompson as honorary secretary and later editor of the journal, who must take much of the credit, with Fred Shaw (honorary treasurer), Eric Winstedt and Dora Yates (both as editors of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society)* for the survival of the society through the uncertain inter-war period.[67]

Although much of the early success of the society was undoubtedly largely due to Macfie's efforts, this should not be to ignore the efforts of a wider, hard core of enthusiasts. The first issues of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* reveal that in its early years the society depended on a few key figures who were largely responsible for running, influencing and directing the society, serving as the officers of the society, the main contributors to the journal, and as the authors of major monographs. David MacRitchie, the son of an Edinburgh surgeon, was the first secretary and treasurer of the Gypsy Lore Society, and was formerly an accountant who gave up accountancy to follow his intellectual pursuits in archaeology, ethnology and Gypsy lore.[68] The first vice-president was Henry Thomas Crofton, a Manchester solicitor and respected Lancashire local historian, and Robert Scott Macfie served as the honorary secretary and editor of the journal.[69]

Charles Godfrey Leland, an American philologist and ethnologist and known to his family and friends simply as 'the Rye', was the founder and first president of the society from 1888 to 1892.[70] He was born in the city of Philadelphia, the son of a commission merchant. Even as a child he was said to be interested in 'seeking the strange by preference', though whether this assessment was made with the benefit of knowing his later fascination with Gypsies is difficult to determine.[71] Following study at Princeton University, a period of time in Europe between 1845 and 1848, and further study at the University of Heidelberg, from where he matriculated in 1846, Leland eventually found his way to Britain. He was

described by one of his fellow lorists as having a 'poetic and imaginative mind' and as having 'a love of the Romantic school and of simple, kindly country folk'; and by himself as a prolific poet, critic, editor, political commentator, folklorist, humorist, philologist, anthropologist, revolutionist, soldier, oil prospector, reformer, educator and artist![72] His interests therefore spread far wider than simply the Gypsies. He possessed a vast private library and he published widely throughout his life on a variety of topics, including the occult. Similarly to George Borrow, his knowledge of linguistics was thought to be superficial but he is said to have 'captured the Gypsy spirit' and through his literary ability he managed to charm the reader, stimulating an interest in the world of the Gypsies.[73] His niece, Elizabeth Pennell, was the first female member of the Gypsy Lore Society.[74]

John Sampson, the first full-time librarian of University College, Liverpool, has achieved a degree of notoriety in tales of the pioneering Gypsy lorists.[75] As well as being a scholar and pillar of the university, Sampson also fathered an illegitimate child, was an adulterer, mixed with bohemians and painters and, when he died in 1931, had his ashes scattered on a Welsh mountain in a pagan funeral.[76] Sampson attracted around him a devoted following and he was responsible for introducing this group of friends and acquaintances, who included Scott Macfie, Dora Yates, Gladys Imlach and Eileen Lyster, the three women being referred to as 'Sampson's disciples', to Gypsy studies.[77] Sampson's cottage in the remote Welsh hamlet of Bettwys-Gwerfil-Goch was a holiday home for such eminent Gypsy lorists as Augustus John, Eric Winstedt, the 'drunken Lincolnshire rector' Reverend George Hall,[78] Robert Scott Macfie and Bernard Gilliat-Smith, and as a result it became known as the 'centre for Gypsy studies' between 1909 and 1914.[79]

Much has been written about Francis Hindes Groome (1851–1902), a prominent lorist, author of various studies and novels on the Gypsies and one of the original eleven members of the society, as much for his unconventional life as for his work. Groome, son of the Archdeacon of Suffolk and a student of Oxford University, 'married' Gypsy Britannia Lee in the summer of 1872. His family embarrassed by his actions, hustled him away and sent him to Europe. On his return he visited Hubert Smith, a Shropshire town clerk, and his Gypsy wife Esmeralda, an event which led to further outrage when she and Groome subsequently fled to Germany. He returned to England when he was aged twenty-three and his father helped to secure him a post as sub-editor for *Chambers' Encyclopaedia* in Edinburgh, where he married Esmeralda in 1876.[80] He began to move in Scottish folklore circles, sharing with them an interest in lore, charms, storytelling and folktales, and was later to become the chief link between the Gypsy Lore Society and the Folk Lore Society.[81] His interest in the Gypsies is said to have begun at an early age, having first been introduced to the subject by one of his teachers at Ipswich School. Gypsies were then to reappear at each of the stages of his life, making their acquaintance when he was at Oxford (which subsequently formed part of his story *Kriegspiel),* and then in Göttingen,

where Romany was a topic of interest to a group of his acquaintances. Once drawn to the Gypsies Groome was unable to escape the attraction and even managed to spend a period of time with them between his time in Göttingen and his arrival in Edinburgh in 1876.[82]

This small group of lorists were united in their enthusiasm for the Gypsy people and close friendships inevitably were formed with each other, most evident in the circle that formed around John Sampson. Many of them shared holidays, toured with each other and went together to the Gypsy camps.[83] This grouping made occasional efforts to broaden the field of lorist study and to establish wider scholarly links and, despite suggestions of mutual suspicion between the Gypsy Lore Society and the Folk Lore Society, some Gypsy lorists were members of both. In fact Leland and MacRitchie served on the International Folk-Lore Council, created in October 1891, and these two, with Francis Groome, gave papers to the Congress held in London in October 1891.[84] But such connections to the wider lorist community appeared only rarely and the Gypsy lorists mostly followed their interests in relative isolation.

'A rare and perhaps peculiar type, a type that few really know and understand'

The description above, which appeared in a review in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1915, was not about the Gypsies but about those who write about them, the Romany Rais.[85] The contacts they developed with the Gypsies led to their self-identification as the genuine friends of the Gypsies, and, in order to distinguish themselves from those whose first priority was to achieve either their sedentarisation or conversion, the label 'Romany Rai' was devised. The precise origins of this term are unknown, though as its appearance coincided with that of the Gypsy lorists it is likely that they invented it themselves in order to bestow prestige and status on their activities. In the main they were thought to be of a 'gentlemanly' or respectable background, with a scholarly, personal and long-lasting interest in the Gypsies and their way of life. The Rais shared not only a curiosity about the Gypsies and a thinly veiled admiration for their way of life and mode of living, but also a respect for their culture and traditions, and a genuine willingness to befriend the people. The most noted collection of Romany Rais, the members of the Gypsy Lore Society, were keen to promote precisely this image of themselves, claiming that the Gypsy Lore Society was 'also an association of Gypsy lovers…most Gypsy scholars are Gypsy lovers too'.[86] Their view of the Gypsies was positive and uninfluenced by the negative and critical opinions of others, which they set out effectively to undermine by what they presented as objective and accurate information.

However, perhaps the best description of the Romany Rais is provided by one of their own number. T.W. Thompson, reviewing the work of another lorist and Rai, Reverend George Hall, said that:

> [The Rai is] a rare and perhaps peculiar type, a type that few really know and understand…. [The Rai] regards these outcasts, these wandering Pariahs, as something more than a backward race who can provide him with interesting and valuable anthropological data: the very thought of them somehow stimulates him; the mere chance of meeting them thrills him; his every encounter with them is an adventure to him, an adventure full of mysterious possibilities; he can almost become as one of them, for he can think and feel as they do, and he can think and feel with them; he would often like to throw in his lot with them, not temporarily or for ulterior motives (to wit the better collection of anthropological material) but for ever and for the pure joy of the thing, yet somehow he usually stops short of this last act of devotion. This romantic, impassioned sympathy for the Gypsy race…is the dominant characteristic of the Romany rai.[87]

This long quotation is interesting for its use of gender-specific language, the belief (or hope) that the Rais were as rare, peculiar and misunderstood as the group they studied, for the use of the overtly sexual imagery of stimulation, passion and thrill, and for the evident appeal of the romantic, mysterious and adventurous spirit. The Rais, like the object of their attentions, were also of the 'outside world', set apart as a strange fraternity.[88] Elsewhere Thompson again wrote of the magnetic appeal of this 'primitive eastern race':

> The moments when we really live are when we surprise some picturesque encampment of Romanichals in a pleasant meadow by the waterside, or travel with them in their weather-stained living wagons along the white high-road, until the cool, sweet summer evening fades into darkness and enables us to pull into a neighbouring lane.[89]

The enthusiasm of the lorists for their Gypsy subjects was evident, on occasion being taken to quite exceptional lengths. In the middle of First World War trench warfare and frontline battles Robert Macfie somehow found the time to send in to the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* a note about a Gypsy he found in an obscure German encyclopaedia which he came across in an attic in a ruined house.[90] Similarly, though perhaps a less extreme example, Richard Dorson, the historian of the folklore movement, considered Francis Groome to have had a 'single-minded, obsessive interest' in the Gypsies which intrigued and eventually possessed him.[91] Groome would think nothing of travelling thirty miles in order to discover just two or three new Gypsy words. As soon as Gypsies appeared the lorists seemed to find them. They went down to their camps with their notebooks, carefully recording names and family histories and searching for new Romani words, and then rushed home to write letters to their fellow lorists, eager to convey the information to other members of the society, swapping pedigrees and newly discovered words like others did stamps. The unexpected arrival in the early twentieth century of foreign Gypsy coppersmiths led to a barely controllable

flurry of activity and notices appeared telling the Gypsy Lore Society members where they could find the newcomers, urging them to see them now before it was too late.[92] The same enthusiasm can be found in the later generation of Rais also, and Andrew McFarlane, writing in 1946, spoke of his pulse beating more quickly 'at the sight of the magic word GYPSY'.[93]

There can, then, be no doubting the enthusiasm and passion of this small and sincere group of antiquarians, folklorists, genealogists and philologists. Gypsies were their hobby and Gypsying was their relaxation.[94] Many took to the roads each year, sometimes for months at a time, which was indicative of the fact that some of the Gypsy lorists were also men of leisure with independent sources of income. The intellectual, social and artistic eminence of those engaged in studying Gypsies was emphasised in case anyone doubted whether this hobby was a sufficiently respectable activity

'The last romance left in the world'

Although with, for example, Francis Hindes Groome it has been possible to identify certain stages of his life when he came into contact with the Gypsies, this alone does not explain his lifelong fascination with the group. Here, though, we are entering the problematic territory of the varied and often complex motives of the Gypsy lorists. For some the interest stemmed from chance contacts, the influence of particular writings, the romance, the archaeologists' desire to capture something before it vanishes, and the scholarly challenge. The Reverend George Hall, the noted Gypsy lorist and author of *The Gypsy's Parson,* became enchanted by the 'bewitching mystery' of a Gypsy girl who happened to attend his school, and this 'Gypsy spell cast upon me in childhood' was later reinforced when he came across the writings of George Borrow.[95] T.W. Thompson was attracted to the group because they were 'the kindliest, liveliest, quaintest, and best of companions', and the Reverend T.W. Norwood's interest was first excited when he was a small boy and the Gypsies stole his donkey, and 'he then and there resolved to study them and learn their language'.[96] Others were unable to point to any such specific incident and simply felt the lure of the Gypsy impossible to resist, often linking this to the mystery and romance of the group:

> I know full well that in writing these *Recollections* in my own fashion I shall be accused of using the 'romantic approach' in describing my Gypsies. But my reply is that the Gypsies *are* [original emphasis] romantic: 'the last romance', as Arthur Symons said, 'left in the world'.[97]

> To me there is something of the charm of an un-told fairy-tale in every fresh encounter with a gipsy. To step out of the twentieth century into a camp of deep, old-fashioned Romanichals is like visiting some forgotten world. I am fascinated by the mystery of these homeless people, whose

> secret language is said to be the nearest surviving relation of the venerable sacred Sanscrit, and whose lore is a veritable pot-pourri of relics picked up in many lands. Let us, while we may, study the few lingering remnants of this strange old Eastern race who have somehow strayed into these Western islands of ours.[98]

The romance for Yates was that the Gypsies, *her* Gypsies, lived in the open, dressed as they liked, ate what they pleased, earnt a living from traditional crafts and called no man their master. Hall was more obviously besotted by a romantic nostalgia for a bygone age and with the Gypsies he found some of the mystery and adventure seemingly lost or forgotten in twentieth-century civilisation. The Gypsy, to the lorist, provided a touch of an idealised past in the modernising, industrialising and urbanising world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was explicitly recognised by Dora Yates, who used to conclude her lecture on the Gypsies with the statement that the Gypsy was 'the last romance left in the world'.[99] This perspective was shared by many a Gypsy lorist, which in turn raises serious questions, acknowledged but dismissed by Yates, about how they came to see and represent the group. This romantic appeal both predated and outlasted the lorists, and many texts are littered with references to the gay and dissolute nature of the group, to their recklessness and frivolity, and to their piquant and striking ways. Their existence was said to provide a glimpse of the ancient eastern life, and their ways contrasted with the gravity and sombre formality of day-to-day life.[100] For these reasons studying the group was seen as a delight and the opportunity to breathe in the atmosphere of the Gypsy camp and company was a rare privilege enjoyed by only a select few.[101]

Whatever their motives for studying the group, their work was given added urgency by the shared and common belief that the Gypsies were a dying race, and the lorists were strongly motivated by a sense of their own role in preserving as much as was possible of the people and their ways before they disappeared forever. The Reverend George Hall, a noted genealogist, made an urgent appeal for the members of the Gypsy and Folk-Lore Club to 'work' every aged Gypsy in the land in order to secure pedigrees and lore before it was too late, and John Sampson added his lament to the decay of the English Gypsies:

> the old race is dying out and leaves no successors. Closer contact with civilisation, changed conditions of life, misdirected and unscientific philanthropy are rapidly reducing their customs and traditions to a dead letter, and their language to an ungrammatical jargon.[102]

The lorists believed, then, that the existing Gypsies, unchanged in their manners, customs, appearance and language from the time of their first migrations, had come to the end of the line and were the last of their kind – the pure or true Gypsy was rapidly becoming a rarity and his story had to be captured before it

was too late. The only way to do this was by talking to them, befriending them, going to their encampments, and by grasping the opportunity of being the last people to be in the privileged position of having contact with a disappearing race. The lorists, echoing the spirit and method of the folklorists, aimed at reconstructing the prehistory of the group from the surviving lore and language of the modern-day Gypsies. A circular issued by the Gypsy Lore Society in 1907 identified the extent of the loss, and suggested that the reasons for this were due not to persecution, as might be expected, but to the opposite, with increased toleration leading to greater assimilation:

> But what centuries of persecution could not destroy is now succumbing to a peaceful but insidious attack. Public opinion has changed, and the Romani wanderers are now regarded with indulgent toleration: the barriers of prejudice that existed on both sides are being broken down; mixed marriages are fairly common; and it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Gypsy to escape, no matter how desperately he may struggle, the modern police-driven engine that obliterates character by forcing every man kindly but firmly into the same cast iron board-school mould. The isolation and purity of the race are gone: nomad habits and distinctive customs are being gradually abandoned: even the beautiful language is fast degenerating to a broken jargon; and the Romani student of the near future will mourn that he has no gypsies to study.[103]

Their disappearance was a part of the decline of rural and merrie England, an England of May-games, wakes, village fairs and festivals and Gypsies as the exotic entertainers, dancers, musicians and fortune tellers. They fitted much less comfortably into the era of Bible societies, mechanics' institutes and savings banks.[104] The poignancy of their disappearance was made the more real and urgent by the fact that they were also believed to be the oldest and most elusive race, and the 'only free people left in the world'.[105] When the Gypsies had gone there would come to an end a stage in the history of mankind and the last hope for all lovers of freedom in the modern, ordered society. The Rais, coincidentally living at an epochal and critical moment in the long history of the Gypsy people, were indulging in a unique experience which would not be available to later generations. They were desperate to bathe in the charm of the true Gypsies, and their picturesque encampments on the village greens, while they were still around.[106]

Although the language of dying and disappearance has all the implications of finality, what was meant by this was that the racially (and culturally) pure and true Gypsy was becoming a rare commodity as a result of progressive absorption, assimilation and intermarriage. In their place emerged a rapidly growing mixed-breed population in which the line between the Gypsy and the non-Gypsy was impossible to draw.[107]

Questions about the purity of the group and the degree to which intermixing had taken place with the host population were first asked in the sixteenth century and repeated in a great many other texts, including the work of George Borrow.[108] For the lorists the process of assimilation and dilution was thought to have entered its final stage.

'Going very scientifically to work'

The lorists and Romany Rais were in no doubt that theirs was the most fair and accurate portrayal of the Gypsy people. They attempted to forestall the comments of potential critics by explaining in the prefaces to their works that they were able to offer authentic and true accounts of the Gypsies, their language, culture and way of life, as their information was not extracted from previously published sources but was taken from the Gypsies themselves. A major element in their claim to scientific objectivity was that they, unlike many other commentators, had actually travelled into the Gypsy camps to carry out detailed anthropological and philological investigation. Once among the Gypsies the lorists confidently believed that they had the necessary skills and knowledge to break down the barriers and extract the information they required. In short, in words which deliberately likened their studies to a scientific experiment, they knew how to use 'the test-tubes and proper reagents'.[109] They reproduced statements from Gypsies to support their arguments, thus giving Gypsies a voice through their works and apparently allowing members of the group itself to speak of ways, customs and language.[110] The lorists, having been granted privileged access to the secret world of the Romany, and in the interests of authenticity, presented their conversations to the reader by means of verbatim transcriptions, often written in Romani and with phonetic spellings intended to convey that the words were genuinely the Gypsies' own, with an English translation appended.[111] Leland attempted to avoid the accusation that his Gypsy words were merely borrowed from other sources, inaccuracies included, by making the point that 'every word of their language…was taken from Gipsy mouths'.[112] He further added to the authenticity of his own studies by noting that his information was gathered 'not by slight and superficial intercourse' with the Gypsies but by a more gradual process of getting to know them 'gradually and sympathetically, without any parade of patronage'.[113] In such a way Leland, as author/editor, was detaching himself from the information given – he was merely recording and passing on. In the grand positivist tradition, the facts spoke for themselves and, given their origins, were undeniably accurate.

The accounts provided were often extremely personal, with the reader being informed of the lives of real individuals, not in order to show their ordinariness but rather in order to highlight the extreme extent to which the people were separate and different. Biographical accounts are given of particular Gypsies and their family histories and genealogies, conversations are 'recalled', and then often pulled together in a travelogue documentary around the remains of 'merrie'

England, traditional crafts and country life. As well as illustrating aspects of life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the reader, by means of a form of oral history, was also being introduced to the collective memory of the Gypsies with regard to origins, customs, language and rites.

The lorists in particular were keen to advertise the objectivity of their studies and to establish their place in the new scientific disciplines of the nineteenth century. John Sampson, writing in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* talked of the journal as being 'by scholars for scholars', and claims were regularly made about the high level of scholarship of society members, its seriousness, and of its members 'going very scientifically to work'.[114] Appeals were made to those with university education to 'observe exactly and record correctly' information about Gypsies, and pride was expressed that the society was composed of 'learned and eminent men [sic]'.[115] The members clearly felt that they had achieved a great deal in pulling Gypsy studies out of its former amateur and marginal status. In the introduction to *Gypsy Folk Tales,* Groome sets out his academic background and shows himself to be extremely well read on the history of the Gypsies, making numerous references to foreign-language sources. He also showed that he had an impressive background in and knowledge of folklore studies even though he stated, 'I am no folklorist'. The lorists were also keen to praise each other, with David MacRitchie complimenting this same volume of Groome's, describing it as a 'treasury of recondite learning, displaying a combination of scholarship and intimate knowledge of Gypsy character which has never been equalled'.[116]

The *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* was intended as the main forum for publishing their findings and taking these to a wider audience. Initially at least, the focus was on Gypsy history, language, customs, folklore and origins. Indeed, the high scholarly reputation of the journal and its recognition as the exponent of modern Gypsy scholarship were seen as the positive half of an ointment-and-fly equation. Robert Macfie confidently asserted in 1910 that the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* was 'the most valuable existing source of Gypsy lore…no future author shall write on the subject without constant reference to its pages', and although this was perhaps a little immodest his prediction has been proved accurate time and again. If this was the ointment then the 'fly' was the perennial problem for the society of the lack of finances and the need for new members.[117]

By the time the society had entered its second stage in 1907/1908 it was recognised that the context had changed and that it was time to also consider the social condition of the people.[118] This revision of focus was caused by the attacks on Gypsies by the governments of Europe and by the negotiations taking place between France and Switzerland to expel Gypsies from Europe. Britain and Germany had agreed to send representatives to the proposed Berne conference called to discuss this. At home, Mr J.H. Yoxall, MP, had already taken action about the matter at both the Foreign and Home Offices and championed the right of Gypsies to asylum and the liberty to move without fear

of persecution, a freedom that was being threatened by the proposed Moveable Dwellings and Children's Bills.[119]

At just the time that the Gypsy Lore Society was undergoing a slight shift in its focus there emerged a new association which proudly announced its associations with folklore study. The Gypsy and Folk-Lore Club, founded in December 1911 by Townley Searle, who claimed to have run away from school at the age of thirteen years to join a Gypsy camp at Folkestone, had all the appearance of respectability. It produced its own journal, the *Gypsy and Folk-Lore Gazette,* held meetings at which Gypsy dancers and musicians were often in attendance, offered lectures and built what it claimed was the largest Gypsy library in the world. In less than six months it had organised twenty-five lectures on the theme of Gypsy lore and held a weekly Romanes class.[120]

Initially the relations appeared to be friendly with the Gypsy Lore Society, with some shared membership.[121] Augustus John, artist and later president of the Gypsy Lore Society, became president in April 1912, having joined as an ordinary member four months previously. The club, located in Bedford Row, London, was opened on 15 January 1912 by another prominent Gypsy Lore Society member, Elizabeth Robins Pennell. However, relations between the two soon turned sour, Augustus John resigned his presidency after less than two months, and the editor of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* wrote the following in the 1912–1913 edition:

> The methods of the Gypsy and Folk-Lore Club have won the indignant disapproval of members of the Gypsy Lore Society who have attempted to support it. Among others Mr Augustus John gave the new venture his willing aid at the beginning, and was unluckily persuaded to become its first president. When personal experience convinced him that it was undesirable to be connected with the Club in any capacity whatsoever, he sent his resignation to Mr Searle.[122]

The reasons for such animosity are not clear and few clues are given. It seems likely that the antagonism was at least in part based on a desire to distance themselves from an association which did not accord with their own vision of serious scholarly study. By this time those in the Gypsy Lore Society, with some justification, felt that they had managed to establish their society and their journal as respectable and respected scholarly enterprises. Not surprisingly, they were alarmed by the appearance not only of a competitor, but of one which seemed likely to pull Gypsy studies back to where it had been some years before. On a more prosaic level, it is also probable that the Gypsy Lore Society, always struggling for members and funds, would have raised an envious eye to the 140 members which the club attracted in its early days.

The lorist image of the Gypsy

Out of the self-confessed sympathy with the Gypsies emerged a distinct picture of the group and their way of life. Despite variations in points of detail from one author to another, the representations of the lorists and Rais showed a high degree of consistency across a range of writings. The unifying theme, as illustrated in the previous chapter, was the core notion of race. As shown, this drew in specific ideas concerning origins, physical appearance, culture, language and character/behaviour. More specifically, the lorists developed the notion of racial isolation and racial purity, which became the keynotes in their concern over the decay of the race in the later nineteenth century. The challenges coming from a more enlightened tolerance, in association with the compulsory clauses of the Education Acts, the decline of the rural economy and the strict application of the Vagrancy Act and other restrictive legislation threatened the separateness, strangeness, mystery and secretiveness of the Gypsy population, causing the lorists to fight even more strongly to uphold the romantic image. In their attempts to rescue something from the decay and to preserve what they believed was the 'essence' of the true Gypsy identity, the lorists wrote with evident fondness of the people and their traditional ways and crafts, often pleasingly situated in romantic rural settings: 'the members of the GLS [Gypsy Lore Society]…added a primitive rustic dimension to their stereotype of the "true Gypsy", as if the rural areas were the only proper context'.[123]

Their representation of the English Gypsies was also of wider significance, sharing much in common with the more extensive writing in the pages of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* on Gypsies elsewhere in the world. The English Gypsies were seen as just one part of a much larger Gypsy racial population, forming a supra-national grouping whose members shared in common, despite certain national differences of lesser importance, their origins, appearance, language, customs and employments.

'Gypsies is a sort of hobby with them'[124]

The lorist self-image and self-depiction of Romany Rais as friends and lovers of Gypsies should not be taken at its self-publicist face value. While there were undoubtedly some genuine friendships, and even affairs and marriages, this is only one part of the story and attitudes to and relationships with the Gypsies also had their other side.[125] At the jubilee dinner of the Gypsy Lore Society, held in June 1938, four Gypsies were present as guests, but this was chiefly in their role as musicians and entertainers. The partnership between lorists, Rais and Gypsies was not between equals, and the impression of closeness, empathy and friendship should perhaps be replaced by, or at least qualified by, one of respectable distance and perhaps on occasions also of justifiable animosity because of the patronising and exploitative attitude of at least some Rais.[126] Further, in the private correspondence of many Gypsy lorists it is possible to identify other

overtones of what might be called 'gentlemanly' behaviour when their interest in the Gypsies is likened to the sport of hunting, with the lorists stalking, hunting and catching the Gypsies, those 'wild hunted creatures',[127] so that a few could be 'bagged' as prize trophies.[128] The lorists wrote of the pleasures of the chase and of the exhilaration in pursuing 'anything so deliciously evasive as the soul of the Romane'.[129] As soon as word of a new camp went round the lorists went in search, and their accounts employ the language of the hunt, with these friends of the Gypsies picking up the trail, enjoying the fun of the game, with the scent getting hotter, eventually tracking their prey to their lairs, having hunted far and wide for their quarry.[130] A fishing analogy, that other pursuit of leisured gentlemen, was used to describe John Sampson's skill in playing and then hooking his catch.[131] The objective went beyond the mere capture or hooking and was extended to, first, discovering words and lore and, then, ultimately, capturing the very soul, the inner self and very being of the Gypsy. In a similar vein, Fred Shaw, honorary treasurer of the Gypsy Lore Society and a noted photographer of the Gypsies, wrote thus to his friend and fellow lorist Bartlett:

> Having recently been poaching upon some of the northern G[ypsy] preserves, I am sending you some of the spoils in the shape of photographs. I only bagged twelve, all told.[132]

Similarly, the same kind of language is evident in a letter from George Hall written in October 1907. He noticed a man whom he suspected of being a Gypsy and, wanting to engage him in conversation, his approach was to introduce himself in the Gypsy language. This had the desired effect as 'one word of Romany brought down my bird'. This particular 'game' had been shot down for lorist investigation, but with words rather than lead.[133] Charles Godfrey Leland, one of the most influential of the lorists and the first president of the Gypsy Lore Society, is also reported as saying: 'I have enjoyed gypsying more than any *sport* [my emphasis] in the world',[134] which is perhaps indicative of what has been described by a later Gypsy lorist, Angus Fraser, as his patrician approach and condescending attitude.[135] A similar point can be found in the introduction to Leland's study of Gypsy sorcery and fortune telling, where Margery Silver notes that the attraction of the Gypsies to the Rais stemmed less from scholarly objectives and more from sentimentalism. She suggests further that the cult of gypsyism 'attracted genteel snobs who, finding themselves threatened by the crude, burgeoning democracy of an upstart age, discovered in the gypsy an immutable feudal relic which they could safely coddle and patronise'.[136]

The enthusiasm with which they engaged in this sport was evident in the way that details were passed among themselves about camps visited, pedigrees and new words discovered, and acquaintances met. The sport also had a very competitive edge, with the first discovery of a group or encampment or the unearthing of a new word leading to an implicit form of point scoring over other lorists and experts. In the same way, points, in the form of respect, could be

deducted if it could be proven that words or other aspects of culture discovered by others were derivative or false. All this was given particular urgency and excitement by their shared belief that unless this was done hurriedly it would be too late as the Gypsies were destined to disappear with the steady decline of rural England.

Going romantically and subjectively to work

The lorists publicly accused others of falsifying the image of the Gypsies and claimed that their descriptions were the only ones which provided the authentic picture. In saying this the lorists simply shared the same delusion – that they alone had privileged access to the 'truthful' picture – adopted by almost all commentators on the group. As with the others, the lorists' claims need some critical consideration. While it has become commonplace now to see the work of the lorists as being framed by and within the parameters of nineteenth-century Victorian race thinking, the criticisms of their work and method also go beyond this. Even at the time other folklorists were said to be critical of the Gypsy lorists' methods and results, perhaps fearful that their own work would be looked upon less favourably as a result, and, privately, the Gypsy lorists were even critical of each other.[137] Leland's work in particular was attacked for being the work of invention, as being 'too fanciful to be trustworthy'[138] and for entering into 'sociological and psychological speculation'.[139]

However, it would be misleading to focus on just Leland, as the flaws in his methodology and approach can be found repeated in a great many other lorists' texts. Even without the benefit of hindsight it seems almost inconceivable that the lorists were not more critical of their methods, being too ready to believe that their various tactics for penetrating the Gypsy world gave them unqualified success. John Sampson was said to have been easily deceived by his Gypsy informant, Matthew Wood, who invented a gibberish that Sampson simply accepted.[140] The same might be said of Charles Godfrey Leland, who read aloud to Gypsies from a Hindi dictionary, promising them a shilling for every word they recognised. Clearly the temptation to 'recognise' a large number of words would have been irresistible, making Leland's method not only highly suspect but also very expensive.[141]

Such blind faith likely stemmed from the lorists' belief that they were not mere students of Gypsies but also their (trusting) friends. While this is indicative of their commitment and passion, it also suggests a potential and actual conflict between the student and the lover, the one objective and scholarly and the other far removed from the position of balanced and dispassionate observation. This level of personal involvement was even presented as a virtue, revealing the dominance of the human side of nature over the impersonal curiosity of the scientific investigator. Friendship was seen as more important than data, and goodwill a more valuable commodity than results.[142]

Even with information at their disposal the lorists did not always take the data to its logical conclusions, turning their backs on anything which did not accord with their belief in the true-blooded and pure Romany. Indeed it was their determination to hold on to the racial perspective at all costs that led the lorists into their portrayal of the group as isolated and secretive, with Indian origins. Angus Fraser, commenting on the lorist desire to preserve the racially pure and true Gypsy, indicates the methodological assumptions and flaws which underlay and informed their work:

> despite all the evidence to the contrary that must have stared them in the face, they tended to favour a rudimentary, genetic determinism in deciding who was to enjoy their benevolent attention. Rather naively, they took blood descent to be an adequate explanation for differences in human behaviour and assumed that, for example, the better the Romani spoken, the more pure-blooded was the Gypsy speaker likely to be, and vice versa.[143]

Their fundamental and shared view about the racial origins and separateness of the group led to assertions about an unchanging identity and the perpetuation of traditions and beliefs and practices that could be traced back over generations and even back to the time of their first migrations. For the most part the lorists did not incorporate any real investigation into the nature and extent of intermixing and intermarriage into their studies, despite the fact that this process was recognised elsewhere as having taken place from the time of the sixteenth century onwards. To have done so would have threatened their core belief in the existence of the pure-blooded Romany. Intermixing became an explanation of the decline of the race by the time of the late nineteenth century, with the implication that this was therefore a recent process. The notion of racial purity could only be upheld if it was believed that, historically, the Gypsies had resisted assimilation and intermarriage and maintained their isolation and independence from the host society. Although the evidence, some of which they themselves provided, pointed to opposite conclusions, the lorists managed this contradiction by either ignoring it or locating it as a recent phenomenon.

However, not all lorists were equally guilty of having blind spots concerning their methods and actions, and Herbert Malleson, in a moment of self-doubt, wondered exactly what the Gypsies actually thought of the Romané Raia who came ‘inquisiting of information’ before recognising that the typical Gypsy responses were silence, romancing, imagination, exaggeration, gloss and lies: ‘We all love the Romaničel, though we all know he will lie to us, fluently and with circumstance.’[144] Most Gypsy lorists, if they shared these concerns, preferred to keep silent on the matter.

Finally, the alleged scientific objectivity of their works was at least matched, and arguably surpassed, by the subjectivity which intruded into much of their writings. To an extent the lorists would not have denied that their writings were

subjective and, without any apparent recognition of any contradiction with the stated objectives of the Gypsy Lore Society, would have justified this on the grounds that they aimed to interest the general reader by writing stories of human interest. Indeed, the hallmark of the Romany Rai was 'that queer, romantic, impassioned sympathy for the Gypsy race'.[145] This description can be found in a review of the Reverend George Hall's *The Gypsy's Parson,* a typical example of a subjective lorist work. The text is anecdotal and incidental, and Hall was clearly hooked on the romance of the Gypsies and of Gypsy life, deriving much of his information from diaries of personal visits to supplement the usual array of other secondary sources. The subjectivity that was apparent in most if not all texts is also in abundant evidence in the work of Francis Hindes Groome, described as 'one of the greatest Ryes of all',[146] 'the greatest gipsy scholar in the world'[147] and 'an excellent Romany scholar…[who] knew far more about the Roms, their language and ways than Borrow or Leland'.[148]

Groome's credentials as a Gypsy scholar make impressive reading. As well as his novels, monographs and contributions to the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* he also wrote various encyclopaedia entries and contributed to such prestigious publications as *The Dictionary of National Biography, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Bookman* and the *Athenaeum,* and gave papers to such associations as the Folk Lore Society.[149] His 1880 publication *In Gypsy Tents* stands out as a statement of contemporary Gypsy lorist thinking.[150] In this text the subjectivity of his writing is evident from the opening pages. He confidently and authoritatively introduces the Gypsy to the reader by such literary devices as verbatim transcripts, phonetically spelt, of alleged conversations and full descriptive passages. The Gypsies are portrayed as merry, dazzling, glittering, handsome, gorgeous, beautiful, friendly, welcoming, homely, warm, courteous, quaint and old-fashioned. Their occupations as entertainers and fortune tellers were presented not as deceitful trickery, echoing the former images, but as skilled and honest means of earning a living. Contrary or diluted features were taken as evidence of mixed blood. In short, a positive and romantic gloss was given to the people, their manner, their work and their appearance as subjective in its assessments and judgements as any text not written by an 'expert'.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt as to the major contribution made by the lorists to our knowledge about the Gypsies. As a group they have provided the single most substantial body of printed material on the Gypsies, now largely located in two major archive collections. As individuals they became the recognised authorities on the subject, writing entries in major reference volumes, contributing to popular journals, and lecturing at meetings of various societies. Between 1909 and 1913 Robert Scott Macfie delivered his lecture on the Gypsies to such varied organisations as the Geographical Society, the Clevedon Naturalist Association, the Literary and Philosophical Society, the Church of England Literary Society,

the Scots Church Literary Society and as part of a series of popular lectures at the Presbyterian Church Hall.[151] The *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* remains an essential source for any serious student of the group, and their many monographs constitute essential reading. Fraser reminds us that they carried out their work 'in their own spare time, and without benefit of research grants', and warns of the dangers of stereotyping them as 'old-fashioned, egocentric, unscientific, escapist, or lacking in political commitment'.[152] Clearly it would be wrong to accuse all the lorists of being guilty of the same faults, whether in method or outlook. In treating them as a body there is indeed the danger of seeing them as all the same, ignoring the variations that could exist between them over the detail of arguments and analysis and the very real criticisms they had of each other. Even so, there is some justification in recognising that the early lorists at least shared a common outlook and approach which, personalities aside, created a far from objective or impartial representation of the group. Despite their personal contacts and claims to be objective commentators, their representations were at times as speculative and fanciful as those of any minor novelist writing fictional stories about the strange Gypsy race.

In short, the artistic or literary often took precedence over the scientific and scholarly in the works of the Gypsy lorists. Moreover, they were bound by the knowledge of their time and conducted their enquiries within the dominant framework of nineteenth-century race thinking. The lorists were part and parcel of this, unable and maybe unwilling to escape the shackles of Victorian racial thought.[153] Their image of the Gypsies was also created out of attributes which they shared as a group and reinforced in each other: their love of freedom and nature, their bohemianism and romanticism, and their marginal position in society as academics, scholars and vicars, removed from urban industrial life. Despite the many problems with their own studies and writings the lorists have handed down as their main legacy a picture of the racial Gypsy which has been imprinted firmly in the popular consciousness.

Notes

1 This opening section will take a similar focus to that adopted by Wim Willems in his *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London, 1997). Willems has provided the fullest and most perceptive study of Grellmann to date. Willems also offers an original and revealing analysis of the work of Borrow which is essential reading, alongside the many biographies and studies of this writer. See also D. Mayall, 'The making of British Gypsy identities, c. 1500–1980', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 21–41. See also Jetske Mijs, 'Scientists in search of the "true" Gypsy', *O Drom,* September 1994, p. 10.

2 Heinrich Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gypsies, being an Historical Enquiry, concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, Customs and Conditions of these people*

in Europe, and their origin, translated into English by Matthew Raper (London, 1787), pp. 161ff.

3 R.A.S. Macfie, 'The Gypsies: an outline sketch', *Romanitshels', Didakais' and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 1, No. 3, July–October 1912, pp. 71–82; Francis Hindes Groome was one of the earliest writers to note that Grellmann purloined much of his material from older works, a theme developed by Wim Willems (1997). See also F.H. Groome, 'The Gipsies', *Academy,* 13 June 1874, pp. 665–667.

4 Grellmann (1787), pp. 161ff.

5 *Ibid.,* pp. ix-xiii.

6 *Ibid.,* p. 67.

7 Willems shows that Grellmann's work was based on a series of articles written by the Hungarian minister Samuel Augustini ab Hortis. Willems describes Grellmann's book as 'unoriginal', a 'compilation of existing texts', and as based on dubious presuppositions and containing a deficiency of reliable empirical information. See W. Willems, 'Ethnicity as a death-trap: the history of Gypsy studies', in L. Lucassen, W. Willems and A.-M. Cottaar, *Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups: A Socio-Historical Approach* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 21–31.

8 Willems, 'Ethnicity as a death-trap', p. 20.

9 See, for example, 'Gypsies in England', *Christian Observer,* Vol. 7, 1808, pp. 91–92, 496–497, 712; Vol. 8, 1809, pp. 286–287; Vol. 9, 1810, pp. 82–83, 278–280, 554–555; Vol. 14, 1815, pp. 23–25, 141, 590–591; Vol. 20, 1821, p. 159; 'Who are the Gypsies?', *Church of England Magazine,* 1842, pp. 163–164, 292–294; *Home Missionary Society Magazine,* September 1836, pp. 44–45; July 1838, pp. 118–119; December 1838, pp. 200–201; December 1841, p. 303; March 1845, p. 60; Rev. J. Baird, 'Proposed plan for the reformation of the Gipsies in Scotland', *Christian Herald,* Vol. 1, 13 April 1839, pp. 231–233; 'Gipsy reformation', *Scottish Christian Herald,* Vol. 1, 6 April 1839, pp. 216–217; 'Society for the benefit of the Gipsies at Southampton', *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,* 3rd Series, Vol. 7, 1828, pp. 251–252.

10 'Meeting of Gipsies: another of Mrs. Bayly's thoughtful plans', *Weekly Record of the Temperance Movement,* No. 253, 1861, p. 40.

11 John Hoyland, *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits and Present State of the Gypsies; designed to develop the Origins of this Singular people, and to promote the Amelioration of their Condition* (York, 1816).

12 James Crabb, *The Gipsies' Advocate: or Observations on the Origin, Character, Manners and Habits, of the English Gipsies: to which are added Many Interesting Anecdotes on the Success that has attended the plans of several benevolent individuals who anxiously desire their conversion to God* (3rd edn, London, 1832), p. 51.

13 See D. Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1988); 'James Crabb', *The New Dictionary of National Biography* (forthcoming).

14 Crabb (1832), pp. 13, 24–5.

15 'Gipsies', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* Vol. xcix, January–June 1866, pp. 570–571.

16 See, for example, 'The English Gypsies', *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge,* Vol. 7, No. 372, 20 January 1838, pp. 17–19; *The Literary and Scientific Repository,* Vol. 3, 1821, pp. 401–411; R.E. Chatfield, 'The English Gipsies', *Theosophical Review,* April 1899, pp. 105–116.

17 See Dora Yates, *My Gypsy Days: Recollections of a Romani Rawnie* (London, 1953), p. 11.
18 See M. Collie and A. Fraser, *George Borrow. A Bibliographical Study* (Winchester, 1984) for a comprehensive list of Borrow's publications.
19 Yates (1953), p. 11. George Behlmer believes that Borrow 'launched the cult of the Gypsy expert'. See G. Behlmer, 'The Gypsy problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 2, Winter 1985, p. 240.
20 See, for example, Willems (1997), pp. 93, 96–9; H. Jenkins, *The Life of George Borrow. Compiled from unpublished official documents, his works, correspondence, etc* (London, 1912), p. 339; see also M. Armstrong, *George Borrow* (London, 1912), pp. 49–50; R. Thurston Hopkins described Borrow as 'the leader of the cult of the gypsy; and no writer since Borrow has cast such glamour of romance about the Moon-Men'. See R. Thurston Hopkins, *George Borrow. Lord of the Open Road* (London, 1922), pp. 36–7
21 Willems (1997), p. 12. Willems shares Jenkins' view that Borrow changed the general view of the Gypsies away from the previously common perspective that they were simply a people 'who robbed the clothes-lines and hen-roosts, told fortunes and incidentally intimidated the housewife'. See Jenkins (1912), p. 339.
22 C.G. Leland, 'The tinkers', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* [hereafter *JGLS],* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1907, p. 82; Bath C. Smart and Henry Thomas Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gipsies* (London, 1875), p. viii. The Rev. S.B. James believed that Borrow's writings 'aroused a general interest in the strange people who have so long lived among us, an isolated semi-barbarous race in the midst of civilisation'. See S.B. James, 'English Gipsies: a monograph in five chapters', *Church of England Magazine,* No. 2337, 16 October 1875, pp. 226.
23 Seton Dearden, *The Gypsy Gentleman: A Study of George Borrow* (London, 1939), pp. v–vi.
24 *Ibid.,* pp. vi, 15–17.
25 He is similarly described in Armstrong's biography as being 'very far from normal', as suffering from 'periodic nervous crises', as being 'tormented by a sense of inferiority', and, perhaps most damning of all, as having 'ambitions…far ahead of his capabilities'. See Martin Armstrong *George Borrow* (London, 1950), p. 48.
26 Collie and Fraser (1984), p. 5. See W. Knapp, *Life, Writings and Correspondence of George Borrow. Derived from official and other authentic sources,* 2 volumes (London, 1899); Hopkins (1922).
27 Jenkins (1912), p. 337.
28 Willems (1997), p. 7.
29 For an account of Borrow's visit to camps in London, see 'Metropolitan Gipsyries', *All the Year Round,* Vol. 21, 26 October 1878, pp. 390–393.
30 Jenkins (1912), p. 337.
31 Willems notes that Borrow's contacts with Gypsies were infrequent and superficial and suggests that he exaggerated the extent of his personal experiences with them. See Willems (1997), pp. 95–97.
32 Typescript note to Dora Yates from a member of the Boswell family, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool [hereafter Gypsy Lore Society Archive], B.2 (15).
33 Silvester Gordon Boswell, 'Wester Boswell's medal', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 34, 1955, pp. 129–133.

34 Willems (1997), pp. 103–104.
35 This was published in 1851 in a three-volume edition of 3,000 copies. Of these 2, 098 were sold in 1851, but then it did not sell very well and was eventually remaindered in 1869.
36 Jenkins (1912), p. 398.
37 Dearden (1939), p. 274.
38 The 1,000 copies of the first run lasted a year, the 2nd edition of 750 copies lasted fourteen years, from 1858 to 1872. See Jenkins (1912), p. 437.
39 Armstrong (1950), p. 7.
40 Dearden (1939), p. 299.
41 See W. Willems, 'Victim or relic? The ambiguous gypsy-image of George Borrow', paper presented to the George Borrow Society, Madrid Conference, June 1993. I am grateful to Professor Willems for providing me with a copy of this paper.
42 See 'Metropolitan Gipsyries', pp. 390–393.
43 Jenkins (1912), p. 165
44 He described them thus in a letter to the British and Foreign Bible Society, 19 July 1836. This is quoted in Dearden (1939), p. 187.
45 'Gipsies', *Family Herald,* Vol. 59, 1887, p. 173.
46 T.W. Thompson, 'Samuel Fox and the Derbyshire Boswells', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1925, p. 14; similarly, Glyn Davis, writing to John Sampson in 1902, commented that Borrow 'certainly suffered from scanty materials at his time, but he should not have added his own pious fiction to them'. Letter from Glyn Davis, of the University College of Wales, to John Sampson, 26 May 1902, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, G10 (35).
47 Jenkins (1912), p. 337.
48 Anon., Review of George Borrow, 'Romano-Lavo Lil: word-book of the Romany; or English Gipsy language', *Athenaeum,* No. 2426, 25 April 1874, pp. 556–557.
49 Roumany Rei [T. Taylor], 'Gypsey experiences', *Illustrated London News,* 29 November 185l, pp. 655–656.
50 Willems, 'Victim or relic?', p. 7.
51 Dearden (1939), p. v.
52 Armstrong (1950), p. 62.
53 Richard M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A History* (London, 1968). Angus Fraser noted that with the founding of the Folk Lore Society in 1878 'the field of folk lore was thereby baptised and defined and equipped with a cause'. See Angus Fraser, 'A rum lot', in Matt T. Salo (ed.), *100 Years of Gypsy Studies. Papers from the 10th Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, North America Chapter, March 25–27, 1988* (Cheverly, Maryland, 1990), p. 3. See also Marian Roalfe Cox, *An Introduction to Folk-Lore* (London, 1904).
54 Dorson (1968), p. 1.
55 *Ibid.,* p. 4.
56 Dorson sees the Romantic movement as being responsible for diverting attention from the more scholarly aspects of folklore study towards the importance of evoking atmosphere and conveying 'the tenderer emotions'. See Dorson (1968), pp. 91–92. The Gypsy lorists were also caught in this tension between creating an attractive, appealing image, wrapped in rural and romantic clothes, and yet also

believing that this was balanced by the rationalism and positivism of their enquiries.

57 See John Sampson, 'Westeriana: Notes and Queries, No. 29', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1909, pp. 281–282.

58 Introduction by Margery Silver to Charles Godfrey Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling. Illustrated by Incantations, specimens of medical magic, anecdotes, tales* (New York, 1962; 1st edn, 1891), p. xviii.

59 The pioneers of Gypsy studies in Europe were Miklosich in Vienna, Bataillard in France and Paspates in Greece.

60 Introduction by Margery Silver to Leland (1962), pp. xv–xvi. Silver is referring to Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy. A Poem,* published in 1868, and Arnold's famous poem about the Oxford scholar who was forced by poverty to travel with the Gypsies, *The Scholar Gypsy.*

61 Fraser, 'A rum lot', pp. 1–14. This review of the lorists contains useful short biographies of David MacRitchie, Francis Hindes Groome, Henry Thomas Crofton and Charles Godfrey Leland. The title of Fraser's article was taken from a description of the original eleven members of the Gypsy Lore Society contained in a letter from C.G. Leland to David MacRitchie as 'a rum lot'. See Yates (1953), p. 162.

62 See Mayall (1988), p. 4.

63 See Fraser, 'A rum lot'. A list of subscribers for the year ending 30 June 1889 gave seventy-two names worldwide. See Gypsy Lore Society Archive, Box xlviii, Files 1–3. The membership included Arthur E.G. Way, of Leigh Woods, near Bristol. When Way's book *No. 747. Being the Autobiography of a Gipsy* (Bristol, [1891]) was published under the 'editorship' of F.W. Carew, the real identity of the author was not known to other members of the Gypsy Lore Society Herbert Bathgate said in a letter to John Sampson on 11 May 1895, 'No. 747 very remarkable, who is Carew…?', Gypsy Lore Society Archive, C9.24.

64 Yates (1953), p. 164.

65 See Archdeacon F.G. Ackerley, 'Memoir of R.A. Scott Macfie', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. xiv, 1935, Special Number, pp. 24ff.

66 Printed Notice, 'The Gypsy Lore Society', January 1908, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.10.

67 Printed Notice, 'Retirement of Mr T.W. Thompson', c.1932, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.110.

68 A. McCormick, 'David MacRitchie', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1925, pp. 49–51.

69 Henry Crofton decorated his house in the style of an Indian bungalow, and was said to have had 'an enthusiastic love of everything Romany'. See T.A.T., 'The Gipsy of to-day', *The Sketch,* 4 September 1895, pp. 329–330.

70 Later presidents of the Gypsy Lore Society included Charles Godfrey Leland (1888–1892); David MacRitchie (1907–1908); Henry Thomas Crofton (1908–1910); Theodore Watts-Dunton (1909–1910); the Marquis Adriano Colocci (1910–1911); Arthur Thesleff (1911–1912); Professor Ernst Kuhn (1912–1913); Lady Arthur Grosvenor (1913–1914); Sir Donald MacAlister (1914–1915); John Sampson (1915–1916); William Ferguson (1922–1927); Sir George A. Grierson (1927–1930); Elizabeth Robins Pennell (1930–1933); Dr Eugene Pittard (1933–1936); Augustus John (1936–1961).

71 E.R. Pennell, *Charles Godfrey Leland: A Biography* (Boston and New York, 1906), p. 24. See also C.G. Leland, 'What we have done: a few parting words from our President', *JGLS,* Old Series, Vol. 11, No. 4, April 1892, pp. 193–199; Behlmer, 'The Gypsy problem in Victorian England', pp. 241–243.

72 David MacRitchie, 'Charles Godfrey Leland', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1924, pp. 97–100. His rather immodest self-description appeared in his *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling. Illustrated by Incantations, specimens of medical magic, anecdotes, tales* (1891; edn consulted, New York, 1962). Leland was aged sixty-three years when the Gypsy Lore Society was formed in 1888, and he died in Florence on 20 March 1903. See also C.G. Leland, *Memoirs,* 2 volumes (London, 1893); Pennell (1906).

73 F.H. Groome, 'The Gipsies', *Academy,* 13 June 1874, pp. 665–667.

74 See Jennifer Myers, 'The Gypsy Lore Society: an analysis of the life and work of Elizabeth Robins Pennell', dissertation completed in part-fulfilment of BA (Hons) History, Sheffield Hallam University, 1999.

75 See Anthony Sampson, *The Scholar Gypsy: The Quest for a Family Secret* (London, 1997).

76 See Robert Chessyre, 'The double life of a Scholar Gypsy', *Telegraph Magazine,* 3 May 1997, pp. 49–52.

77 Yates (1953), p. 166. See Gladys Imlach, *Freda's Fortune* (London and Edinburgh, 1907); M. Eileen Lyster, *The Gypsy Life of Betsy* Wood (London, 1926).

78 Hermione Lee, 'A foot in both camps: a review of Anthony Sampson, *The Scholar Gypsy: The Quest for a Family Secret', Independent on Sunday,* 22 June 1997, p. 36. Lee also suggests that the appeal of the Gypsies to this group was not unrelated to the allure of Gypsy girls.

79 Yates (1953), p. 77. Yates noted also that 'Gypsies had ever been the salt of my life' (p. 161).

80 See Silvester Gordon Boswell, *The Book of Boswell. Autobiography of a Gypsy,* edited by John Seymour (London, 1970), p. 184. Boswell noted that Esmeralda was said to be depicted in several of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings. See also 'Esmeralda Groome: an appreciation by her Romanipen', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. xviii, No. 4, October 1939, pp. 153–158. She eventually divorced Groome in 1898 and returned to her own people.

81 Dorson (1968), pp. 270ff.

82 Theodore Watts-Dunton, 'The Tarno Rye (Francis Hindes Groome)', *Athenaeum,* 22 February 1902, pp. 243–246.

83 It is important not to overstate their friendliness with each other as the group was also riven with petty rivalries and jealousies and a competitive spirit which was measured by Romani words collected or Gypsy friends made. Groome, for example, did not have the unequivocal respect of his lorist colleagues and was roundly condemned for spelling Gypsy with an 'i'. See Letter from Herbert Bathgate to John Sampson, 18 June 1895. Gypsy Lore Society Archive, C9 (27).

84 Dorson (1968), p. 298; J. Jacobs and A. Nutt (eds), *The International Folk-Lore Congress, 1891: Papers and Transactions* (London, 1892), pp. xiv-xxii.

85 T.W. Thompson, 'Review of G. Hall's *The Gypsy's Parson,* 1915', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1914–1915, pp. 233–240.

86 Printed Circular, November 1922, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.28.

87 Thompson, Review of Hall, p. 234.
88 Yates (1953), p. 161.
89 See T.W. Thompson, 'Gipsies: an account of their character, mode of life, folk-lore and language', *Tramp Magazine,* October 1910, pp. 46–53.
90 Andreas, 'An obituary of R.A.S. Macfie', Scott Macfie Collection, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, MSS 16.8.
91 Dorson (1968), p. 270.
92 Printed Notice, 'Foreign Gypsies in England', c.1911, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, Ll.23. See Eric Otto Winstedt, 'Coppersmith Gypsy notes', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1914–1915, pp. 246–266.
93 A. McFarlane, 'The memories and opinions of Victoria Lee', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 25, Nos. 3–4, 1946, p. 120.
94 See, for example, A. Symons, 'Two portraits', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1913–1914, p. 2; Reverend G. Hall, 'Preface to the Heron pedigree', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1913–1914, p. 86.
95 Rev. George Hall, *The Gypsy's Parson: His Experiences and Adventures* (London, 1894), p. 27; see also the interview with the Reverend George Hall from the *Morning Leader,* reproduced in 'The Gypsies' parson', *Romanitshels', Didakais' and Folk-Lore Gazette, Vol.* 1, No. 1, January 1912, pp. 8–9.
96 Thompson, 'Gipsies: an account of their character', pp. 46–53; Helen Grosvenor, The Rev. T.W. Norwood', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1908, p. 388. Another Reverend, D.M. Bartlett, also relied on a set of superlatives when describing his fascination with the group: 'the jolliest, kindest, most interesting people on earth'. See Reverend D.M. Bartlett, 'Hobby horses: by some who ride them: No. XI: studying Gypsies', *Treasury,* August 1909, p. 428.
97 Yates (1953), p. 181.
98 See Reverend G. Hall, 'The Gipsies of England', *Sunday at Home,* April 1912, pp. 413–419. See also Letter from Peter Binnall to Archdeacon Bartlett, 7 July 1925 and 11 July 1925, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, B2(11) and B2(12).
99 Dora Esther Yates, typescript notes for lecture, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, D11 (4).
100 'Gipsies', *Family Herald,* Vol. 59, 1887, pp. 173–174. See also H., 'Fortune-telling', *New Monthly Magazine,* 1823, p. 337.
101 When describing the Gypsy skill with horses displayed at the fairs, the Reverend D.M. Bartlett added:

> no one with any spark of romance in his nature can fail to have his eyes and his imagination delighted by him and his surroundings at such a time. It is, indeed, a bit of old 'merrie England' still remaining, and the Gypsy is still the centre of it all, as he has been for centuries.
> (Bartlett, 'Hobby horses', p. 428)

102 John Sampson, 'English Gypsy songs and rhymes', *JGLS,* Old Series, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 1890, pp. 80–92. Reverend George Hall made his appeal in his article 'Notes on the Boss pedigree', *Romanitshels', Didakais' and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 1, No. 4, July–October, 1912, pp. 120–121.

103 Printed circular from R.A.S. Macfie, April 1907, 'The Gypsy Lore Society', Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.6.

104 See J.P.P.C., 'The Norwood Gypsies', *Literary Lounger,* 1826, pp. 88–96, for an early expression of this perspective. For a lament for the disappearing old-fashioned fair and its Gypsy associations, see F. Anstey, 'A Gypsy fair in Surrey', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* 1888, pp. 625–633. See also C. Stein, 'Our Gypsy visitors', *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes,* Vol. 70, 1898, p. 23.

105 Dora Esther Yates, 'Gypsy Lore in Britain', Manuscript, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, D.11(7).

106 See, for example, W.A. Dutt, 'With the East Anglian Gypsies', *Good Words,* Vol. 37, 1896, pp. 120–126.

107 See, for example, Macfie, 'The Gypsies: an outline sketch', p. 71.

108 As noted in the previous chapter, some commentators believed that Romany blood would overpower all others. See review of W. Simson, *A History of the Gipsies with specimens of the Gipsy language, edited, with Preface, Introduction and Notes, and a Disquisition on the Past, Present and Future of Gipsydom by James Simson* (London, [1866?]), in 'Gipsies', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* Vol. xlix, January–June 1866, p. 577.

109 C.G. Leland, 'The tinkers' talk', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1907, pp. 168–180.

110 There is a similarity here with many later works. For example, Judith Okely's own study was based on extensive fieldwork and, in defending her particular definition of the Gypsy, she rested the substance of her case on the altar of self-ascription.

111 See, for example, C.G. Leland, *The English Gipsies and their Language* (London, 1874). Leland's text also includes references to other works on Gypsy language by writers such as Simson, Borrow, Paspati and Pott.

112 Leland (1874), p. v. He added, 'There are now in existence about three hundred works on the Gipsies, but of the entire number comparatively few contain fresh material gathered from the Rommany themselves' (pp. xii-xiii).

113 Leland (1874), p. vi.

114 John Sampson, 'Vale et Ave', Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.26; Printed Notice, 'The Gypsy Lore Society', January 1908, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L.1.10.

115 R.A.S. Macfie, 'Gypsy lore', *University Review,* Vol. 7, No. 38, November 1908, pp. 93–107; and Leland, 'What we have done', pp. 193–199.

116 David MacRitchie, Prefatory note to New Series of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society,* July 1907, p. 2.

117 Printed Notice, 'The Ointment and the Fly', October 1910, from R.A.S. Macfie, Honorary Secretary, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L.1.19.

118 Printed Notice, 28 January 1908. Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.57.

119 See Printed Notices, 28 January 1908, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, LS L1.57, and Printed Notice, May 1908, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, L1.16.

120 Letter from William Townley Searle to Canon Bartlett, 15 June 1912, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, B.2(93).

121 The names of Robert Scott Macfie, Herbert Malleson, George Hall, Eric Otto Winstedt, Alice Gillington, Elizabeth Pennell and Theodore Watts-Dunton are all included in the list of the fifty-nine members of the society provided in the *Romanitshels', Didakais' and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1912, p. 31.

122 'Notes and Queries No. 50: The Gypsy and Folk-Lore Club', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1912–1913, pp. 330–331. See also *Gypsy and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1913, pp. 43–44; *Standard,* 11 July 1912; *Daily Sketch,* 10 December 1912.

123 Fraser, 'A rum lot', pp. 7–8.

124 W.A. Dutt, 'English Gypsies. An interesting article describing the habits and customs of the dwellers in the "tents of Egypt"', *Cassell's Magazine,* Vol. 53, 1911, p. 54.

125 See McFarlane, 'The memories and opinions of Victoria Lee', pp. 120–132; James Stewart-Liberty, 'Notes and Queries: talk round a Gypsy camp fire', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 32, Nos. 3–4, July–October 1953, pp. 146–150.

126 Lazzy Smith, a Gypsy who went to the House of Commons to speak against George Smith of Coalville's proposals for a Moveable Dwellings Bill, said that the Gypsy lorists were exploiting the Gypsies in order to make money. This stems from a dispute with Robert Scott Macfie over Smith's *Incidents in a Gipsy's Life…the Royal Epping Forest Gipsies* (Liverpool, 1886; Leicester, [1892]). See John Myers, 'Lazzy Smith in Egglestone's note book', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. xvi, Nos. 1–2, 1937, pp. 1–6.

127 H. Malleson, 'A sweet street sanctuary', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1910–1911, p. 59. An article in *The Graphic* (13 July 1889) was entitled 'Hunting for Gypsies'.

128 An article in the *Gypsy and Folk-Lore Gazette* advised the would-be student of Gypsies to 'first catch your Gypsy' and find 'your quarry', warning all the while that 'a Gypsy is hard to catch'. See 'The complete Romano Rai', *Gypsy and Folk-Lore Gazette,* Vol. 2, No. 2, 1913, pp. 69–71.

129 In a revealing insight into the mind of one Romany Rai, Herbert Malleson writes:

> For, O my brothers, are we not hunters too? Is there not something of the whoop and the halloa about our dealings with the Romane? It is quite true we wish him no ill. On the contrary, we love him, and would save him from the harrying of modern civilisation…. We are all in the chase too. His ultimate secrets are our quarry. We have run him down as he was never run down before, since old Andrew Borde gave the first chivy. We have come to the ransacking of his person, and every Gypsy Lore Journal that finds an upright and even honourable place on our bookshelves is a receptacle of stolen goods. My conscience pricks me at the same time that my heart beats in the hour of discovery.
>
> (Malleson, 'A sweet street sanctuary', pp. 56–57)

130 Yates (1953), pp. 46–47, 56–57.

131 *Ibid.,* p. 29.

132 Letter from Fred Shaw, honorary treasurer of the Gypsy Lore Society, to Canon Bartlett, 14 November 1911, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, B2(94). See also Sampson, 'English Gypsy songs and rhymes', pp. 80–92.

133 Letter from George Hall, 3 October 1907, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, B2(3.3).

134 C.G. Leland, *The Gypsies* (Boston and New York, 1881), pp. 178–179.

135 Fraser, 'A rum lot', p. 7.

136 Introduction to Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling,* 1962 edn, p. xxi. In another revealing anecdote of the social gulf that separated the Gypsy lorists from their subjects, Lawrence Boswell recounted a story about John Sampson, who, having asked a Gypsy 'friend', Lawrence Townsend, to prepare him a meal of hedgehog, then arrived in full evening dress of long tailcoat and bow-tie. See L. Boswell, 'The Blackpool Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 34, Nos. 1–2, January–April 1955, pp. 42–45.

137 Thompson, Review of Hall, p. 235.

> They formed, however, rather a back-biting coterie, as an examination of their voluminous correspondence shows. In their letters to each other, Leland and Palmer were none too complimentary about Smart and Crofton, Groome sneered at Smith's pretensions…. And all of them were critical of Borrow.
> (Collie and Fraser, 1984, p. 80.)

138 Letter from Henry Crofton to John Sampson, 11 August 1907, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, C10(9).

139 Introduction by Margery Silver to Charles Godfrey Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-telling,* p. xix. A contemporary review was especially damning of Leland's work:

> He plays around the subject and embellishes his truths. His works are literature, not cut and dried treatises on Gypsy language and custom. It needs no profound knowledge of Romany to distinguish between the cases in which he faithfully reports the words of the real Gypsy, or speaks 'romanly' in his own person, or allows himself more than a little linguistic licence in rounding off a Gypsy ballad or turning some of his quaint fancies into Romany…. Leland, especially in his later works, coins fanciful words of his own to supply lacunae in our Romany vocabulary.
> ('Anglo-American Romany: a review with some observations on various methods of collecting the Gypsy tongue', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1908, pp. 78–79.)

140 Letter from R.A. Scott Macfie to E.O. Winstedt, 25 May 1909, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, B10(l).

141 Willems, 'Victim or relic?'.

142 Thompson, Review of Hall, p. 235.

143 Fraser, 'A rum lot', p. 7.

144 Malleson, 'A sweet street sanctuary', p. 59.

145 Thompson, Review of Hall, pp. 233–240.

146 Collie and Fraser (1984), p. 80.

147 T. Watts-Dunton, 'The Tarno Rye (Francis Hindes Groome)', p. 244.

148 Letter from George Hall, 11 February 1907, Gypsy Lore Society Archive, 32(29). Theodore Watts-Dunton also compared Groome to Borrow, criticising Borrow for being superficial and anti-academic and for presenting a picture that was 'coloured by romance'. See Watts-Dunton, 'The Tarno Rye', p. 244. In contrast, Groome was

seen as being scholarly and academic, and as presenting an in-depth and realistic picture of the group.

149 One reviewer said of the novel *Kriegspiel* that it was 'exciting and unsound: only isn't the butter spread rather thick?' At times the line between the serious text and the novel was drawn thinly. See Andrew Lang, quoted in Dorson (1968), pp. 271, 306–307. See also Watts-Dunton, 'The Tarno Rye', pp. 243–246.

150 See also Mayall, 'The making of British Gypsy identities', pp. 30–31.

151 Interestingly, in a later draft of the lecture Macfie referred to the Gypsies as 'these parasites more alien than the Jews'. See R.A.S. Macfie, 'The Gypsies: an outline sketch', Typescript of lecture prepared for the Leeds Philosophical Society, 1911, with an alternative beginning, dated 16 January 1923, p. viii, Scott Macfie Collection, MS. 10.28.

152 Fraser, 'A rum lot', p. 12.

153 Angus Fraser noted that the Gypsy lorists,'like anyone else[,]…reflected the spirit of their age', but then appeared to downplay the significance of this when he added that their aim was simply to gather information, as if this was an objective and unbiased activity and process, 'with no particular program or methodology to determine the course of their studies'. (Fraser, 'A rum lot', p. 1.) Fraser thus repeated the Gypsy lorist claim that they were merely going scientifically about their work, impartially collecting facts and information. While their work may not have been determined by any *conscious* programme or methodology, it is precisely the folklorist emphasis within their studies and the very subjectivity of their approach, methodology and writing that, at the very least, raises important questions about objectivity in their work.

7
Gypsy ethnicity
The concept, the legal battle and Gypsy politics

The belief that Gypsies form one of the world's many ethnic groups is now the most commonly adopted approach in scholarly and other writings on the group. However, this does not mean that all those promoting an ethnic definition agree in the components of that identity or even the nature of the boundaries which mark the group from others. The ethnic Gypsies encountered in the work of, for example, Judith Okely are of a different kind to those written about by Thomas Acton even though both share a belief in the validity of the ethnic classification.[1] Also, the broad, though far from unanimous and variously interpreted, consensus among Gypsy scholars can give a misleading impression concerning the degree to which the ethnic definition of Gypsies is acknowledged in the wider scholarly community and by the general public. In the many works on ethnicity and ethnic identity, written primarily by anthropologists and sociologists, the examples and case studies range from Aborigines and Jews to the many and various tribes of Africa, with Gypsies only noticeable because of their absence. This academic exclusion is symptomatic of a broader disregard of the value or legitimacy of an ethnic identity for Gypsies. Such scholarly neglect is mirrored by a continuing popular perception of the group which significantly and pointedly excludes Gypsies from the ranks of the world's ethnic populations and so allows the spectre of the unrespectable Gypsy to dominate.

The significance of these issues stems from the inextricably linked campaigns for human and civil rights. In contemporary society, to deny the Gypsies ethnicity is to relegate them to the ranks and status of parasitic and troublesome outsiders and outcasts. In particular, the denial of compensation for their suffering at the hands of the Nazis was based on the repeated argument that they were not a legitimate ethnic group. More recently, in Britain, in order for Gypsies to be brought within the legal provisions outlawing discrimination and racism, there had to be a prior legal ruling that they constituted an ethnic group and this was achieved only after a bitter and protracted struggle. The problems around ethnicity and rights have subsequently also been taken up in the media. In an attempt to win public sympathy for the plight of Gypsies and to build support for the recognition of their basic rights, especially for those victimised by public and official persecution in central Europe, journalists in the broadsheet media implicitly or explicitly favour the ethnic representation. To recognise

their ethnicity would be to accept their demands for the same fundamental human rights as those called for by, or on behalf of, the world's other (persecuted) minorities. The controversies and debates about Gypsy identity, and particularly around the notion of ethnicity, are therefore highly politicised, sensitively charged and bitterly contested. Attempts, whether in law courts or scholarly studies, to question or deny Gypsy ethnicity are challenged and condemned by activists as irresponsible, ill informed and damaging, and although this reaction is understandable it has also led to counter-charges that political correctness has come to replace reasoned academic debate.[2]

The exclusion of Gypsies from much of the general work on ethnicity, the varying meanings given to Gypsy ethnicity, the long legal struggle and the commonplace refusal to accept them as an ethnic group to a large extent stem from the ambiguous and ill-defined nature of the concept itself, and this will be examined in the opening sections of this chapter. This will be followed by a review of the struggle to establish the Gypsies' ethnic status in the British courts and the legally established criteria for ethnicity. The final section will consider the emergence of Gypsy political groups and processes of ethnic self-identification.

The emergence of the concept of ethnicity

In order to appreciate the complexity of the issues that surround the controversies around the ethnic Gypsy it is necessary to have a sense of the origins and evolution of the concept itself. However, this is to enter conceptual territory that is even more rocky and, at times, impenetrable than that of race. The concept has been developed and applied in a variety of disciplinary contexts, including archaeology, anthropology and sociology, with each bringing to it their own traditions, approaches, methods and purposes.

The concept of ethnicity and the division of the world's population into ethnic groups, each with their own separate identities, is thought to have first appeared in Julian Huxley's and Alfred Haddon's challenge to Nazi racial science, *We Europeans,* in 1935.[3] The wider use and acceptance of the concept dates from the years immediately following the Second World War.[4] The timing is of course significant, as the concept of ethnicity emerged out of the discrediting of race and, in the works of scientists and academics at least, came to replace race as the primary system for classifying peoples. Nancy Stepan talks of the changes taking place in the biological and anthropological sciences as leaving race 'so long at the centre of science, on the sidelines'.[5]

Two key moments in this classificatory transition were the publication in 1942 of Ruth Benedict's repudiation of racial classification and the UNESCO statements on race, published in 1950, 1952 and 1967.[6] One of the most striking impressions on reading Benedict's work today is that she had to establish certain points which we would now largely take for granted: that language is learnt and not acquired, that all cultures are hybrid and not pure, and that cultural

achievements are not mechanically inherited. Benedict illustrated multiple ancestry by charting population migrancy and intermingling and wrote of the 'plasticity' of the 'human animal' as a challenge to the idea of fixed characteristics.[7] The twin pillars of race thinking, racial purity and racial superiority, were dismantled as absurdities and falsehoods. Yet, despite the logic of these arguments, Benedict, like others before her, was unable to break free of all aspects of race thinking and still held to the belief that the world's population could be divided into separate biological units.

The major premise of the first UNESCO statement, that race was 'less a biological fact than a social myth', was a suggestion too far for many physical anthropologists, even though it represented the views of scientists from other fields.[8] The second statement, issued in 1952, to some extent took a step backwards by allowing for the existence of biological races and the possibility of innate intellectual and emotional differences even though it rejected doctrines of racial purity and racial hierarchy.[9] However, if the 'retreat of scientific racism' was consolidated by the 1950s, the steps towards this had been taken much earlier.

The most significant challenge to the concept of race and race thinking in the nineteenth century came with the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Darwin's thesis about the evolution of species and natural selec-tion showed the capacity of humans for change and adaptation, which stood in direct opposition to the more commonplace racial notions of fixed and permanent type.[10] Darwin returned to earlier theories concerning the influence of environmental factors whereby characteristics suited to particular conditions would flourish while those unsuited would be eliminated.[11] However, the full significance of these arguments was not fully realised until later, and at the time his work did little to destabilise the strength with which racial theory gripped the Victorian mind. Indeed, not only did the concept of race survive this potential undermining of its very foundations but it even re-emerged stronger, invigorated by the corruption of Darwin's ideas in social Darwinist thinking.[12] This body of thought combined theories of evolution with the race concept to argue for the higher evolution of some racial types over others and the eventual disappearance of the weaker.

If the work of Charles Darwin provided the scientific ideas to challenge the race concept, albeit unrealised in their full significance until much later, this was then supplemented in the late nineteenth century by ideas of cultural relativism which, while accepting difference, rejected the racial arguments of hierarchies and superiority/inferiority.[13] If the ideas of Darwin and the cultural relativists are taken together, then at the same time as race thinking was 'hardening' its very foundations were also, paradoxically, being quietly and progressively undermined.

However, it was not until the early twentieth century that the foundations of race thinking were substantially threatened, and a major factor in this process was the change taking place in the very nature of the scientific disciplines and even among the scientists themselves. The most comprehensive analysis of this

is provided in the 1992 study by Elazar Barkan, who looks at the work of leading biologists and anthropologists in the inter-war years. Barkan argues that the movement to a greater egalitarian discourse in science was provided by the entry of women, Jews and left-wingers into the profession and by the evolution of a range of new sciences which ultimately challenged the methodology and arguments of the earlier physical anthropologists. The rapid development of the social sciences was matched by the progressive decline of the sciences which previously had served to legitimate race thinking. More broadly, these changes within science need to be located within a range of socio-economic changes occurring in the early twentieth century which further served to undermine notions of racial inequality and biological determinism.[14]

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were a number of scientists and social scientists whose work, individually and collectively, was developing into a substantial and influential critique of racial science. The list includes scholars such as the Harvard anthropologist Richard Dixon, the sociologists Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) and Max Weber (1864–1920), the geneticist Gregor Johann Mendel (1822–1884), Franz Boas (1858–1942), a German-American anthropologist at Columbia University, and the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1910s and 1920s.[15] The growing critique of race picked up further momentum in the 1930s and 1940s with the work of such writers as the previously mentioned Huxley and Haddon, the scientific humanist Lancelot Hogben, and Jacques Barzun.[16] As a result of these various labours the very methods, principles and arguments of the physical anthropologists were in question and scientists came to the conclusion that measurements of physical difference – whether of limbs, cranial capacity, cephalic indices, or any other internal or external bodily part or form – did not permit the division of the world into separate racial types. Instead it was realised that the differences *within* one so-called racial group were as great as differences *between* groups. The methods and conclusions of physical anthropology were exposed as unreliable and inconsistent and the whole concept of racial classification was seen as unworkable. Developments in such new sciences as genetics, social and cultural anthropology, sociology and psychology saw the problems of difference and classification approached from new directions. These new sciences and new methodologies displaced, if not entirely replaced, much of the framework and many of the assumptions and conclusions of the older science, with an emphasis on the social and subjective subverting the faith in objectivity and measurement which had so dominated earlier racial science. Differences now came to be understood and explained in terms other than racial.[17] A movement from the physical to the social sciences in some ways represented a partial return to pre-nineteenth-century ways of thinking, with a greater role again being given to the environment in shaping and determining behaviour and relations between groups. The shift in scientific thinking is effectively summarised by Thomas Gossett:

> Racism had developed into such a contradictory mass of the unprovable and the emotional that the serious students eventually realised that as a source of explanation for mental and temperamental traits of a people it was worthless. Once this point was accepted, the top-heavy intellectual structures of racism began to topple, one after another.[18]

Changes in the nature of scientific thought and practice fundamentally weakened the race construct, but it is generally believed that the decisive blow was provided by the political experience of Nazi racial science and the Holocaust.[19] Although the intellectual critique of race thinking could take place within the academic community, it needed the social and political expression of these ideas under the Nazis before the concept could be morally and politically, as well as intellectually, condemned. While speaking of the destruction or defeat of race is, unfortunately, to overstate the case, it is without doubt that, in the post-war context, knowledge of the use by the Nazis of racial arguments to inform political ideology and policy meant that notions of innate superiority/inferiority and permanence of type could no longer be openly voiced without the spectre of the Holocaust being raised.

By the 1950s the scientific base of the race concept had been largely, though not entirely, eroded and the racial policies of Nazism had ensured, in the short term at least, the political and moral untenability of race thinking.[20] In its place, instead of the inflexible and racist implications and outcomes of racial categorisation, the concept of ethnicity appeared not only to distinguish between groups but to do so in a way that was non-judgmental, non-hierarchical, and carrying none of the ideas of superiority and inferiority. Rather, ethnicity offered a system of classification which simply recognised difference, based on culture rather than biology.

Ethnicity: 'located in the eye of the observer'

The study of ethnicity and related issues has been one of the major academic growth areas of recent years. Alongside the more theoretical works are studies of individual ethnic groups and explorations of ethnicity in relation to themes such as health and nationalism. Even a superficial reading of some of these texts will reveal the first major problem that has to be confronted. First, theories of ethnicity and ethnic identity have to accommodate the full range of differently originating, styled and composed ethnic groups. This, of course, in turn raises the inevitable difficulty over definition. The meaning of ethnicity and the components of ethnic identity vary from one commentator to the next:

> As for the meaning of ethnicity, the notion has become something like beauty, which is said to be located in the eye of the observer. Each analyst has attached a different meaning to the term.[21]

For this reason, as with the race concept, the search for a single definition acceptable to everyone would be wasted labour, and the warnings against the danger and futility of this are given in many key studies. Indeed, Siân Jones has even suggested that the expansion of the category to include, among others, groups formerly seen as 'nations', 'tribes', 'minorities', 'cultures', 'racial groups' and 'religious groups' raises serious questions about the utility of the concept itself.[22]

Govers and Vermeulen, having provided their own definition of ethnic identity, then remind the reader:

> It should be emphasised that whatever criteria are used to distinguish ethnic identity from other identities, problems remain in the sense that there will be a tension between what our definition 'prescribes' as ethnic phenomena and what everyday discourse (some of) our colleagues, or our intuition would label as such.[23]

Before exploring some of the key issues and debates raised by the problems of definition, it is instructive to briefly consider the ways in which scholarship on the subject has evolved, a task which itself can be daunting if one is not familiar with the disciplinary language and concepts of sociology and anthropology. The accusations of misunderstanding, misrepresentation and distortion which characterise the exchanges between some of the main protagonists in the field compound the difficulties.[24] Nevertheless, it is possible to identify particular trends or schools of thought in the writing on ethnicity. The traditional analysis of the history of the concept begins by identifying a movement from the original primordialist definition of the 1950s and 1960s, through the circumstantialist/situationalist analysis of the late 1960s and 1970s, and on to the more recent constructionist school of thought. The danger with such labels and periodisation is that they can obscure some important complexities and there is no single, agreed meaning to any one of these different approaches. Even so, it is possible to identify the differing, if broadly defined, positions that have been adopted.[25]

Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan identify three key ideas of the primordialist perspective: that primordial identities or attachments are natural and spiritual rather than being based in social interaction, self-interest or mutual obligation; that primordial sentiments are 'ineffable, overpowering and coercive'; and that primordialism is a matter of sentiments, bonds and attachments.[26] Indeed, the importance of these loyalties and emotional ties cannot be underestimated as ethnicity is nothing without them, a point conceded even by most social constructionists.

The ethnographic/primordialist perspective therefore establishes the importance of such fundamental and natural 'primordial attachments' as a long lineage of almost unbroken identity, common origins, language and way of life, immediate contiguity and kin connection, endogamy and tribal laws – in short, blood, speech and custom. It is these deep-seated and irrefutable qualities that

define a people and make the boundaries clear and impermeable. In times of change, when threatened by outsiders or when experiencing life as a minority group within a larger society, people are thought to fall back on these basic, natural attachments and to form themselves into ethnic groupings. That is, ethnicity is expressed as a basic, natural response to a felt emotional need. The key defining language is the one that is first taught (the 'mother' tongue), not one that might be learnt at some later date; the key religion is the one born into, not one that might be adopted. For the primordialist ethnic identity is given, and so fixed, at birth. Culture is inherited, not learnt.

Siân Jones identifies four main problems with this approach:

- it romanticises and generalises ethnic identity;
- it suggests that primordial attachments are involuntary and coercive and does not explain the fluidity of ethnic boundaries;
- it fails to allow for the social and historical context in which groups are formed;
- it fails to acknowledge that the central concepts of 'ethnic group' and 'nation' are themselves historically situated and culturally constructed.[27]

An alternative understanding of ethnicity began to emerge in the late 1960s, stimulated by the publication of Fredrik Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* in 1969, in which ethnic groups were not seen as a natural or primordial phenomenon but rather as interest groups produced through social interaction.[28] This circumstantialist or situationalist perspective saw a shift in emphasis from the primordial criteria for ethnic group membership and its emotional function to the processes of group formation and boundary-making stimulated by self-interest and practical needs.[29] Ethnic group boundaries and identities were not seen as fixed, given and immutable but as fluid and subject to change, dependent on external circumstances.[30]

Siân Jones once again provides a summary of the problems with the instrumentalist perspective:

- it is reductionist by defining ethnicity in terms of behaviour in a specific situation;
- it neglects cultural and psychological dimensions;
- it assumes that human behaviour is rational;
- it blurs the boundary with other types of interest groups.[31]

The constructionist view began to emerge in the 1980s as a result of the appearance of interdisciplinary studies that critically looked at the broad issue of group identity. Of these the most influential were by Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger and Benedict Anderson, and it is as a result of such challenging and provocative works that concepts of imagined communities, invented traditions, myths and constructed identities quickly found their way into a very wide-

ranging scholarly discourse.[32] Within the field of ethnic studies, there is no consensus concerning the key elements of the constructionist approach. Cornell and Hartmann describe it as a synthesis of the other two, accepting 'the fundamental validity of circumstantialism while attempting to retain the key insights of primordialism'.[33] Although accepting the importance of origins, history and culture as markers of ethnicity, the constructionists view these as invented and imaginary rather than real, true or natural. Also, as shown by Govers and Vermeulen, a major development in the theory of ethnicity was provided by the constructionist concern with boundaries and with the 'variability, fuzziness and discontinuity of identities'.[34] If this line of argument is taken one step further a key idea to emerge from the constructionist perspective is that ethnicity is constantly being remade and remodelled. The foundations remain the same but the specifics of the construct itself shift and adapt as a response to external factors, the dynamics of the group and group change itself. In place of the static, primordialist model, ethnicity is here presented as a process, subject to change, redefinition and contestation.

The language of invention, myth, construction, imagined communities and belief suggests the false or artificial nature of what has been built, in this case an ethnic group or ethnic identity. To see ethnic identities as 'independent of reality, a collective myth or fantasy', is to adopt what has been termed a strong version of constructionism.[35] Cornell and Hartmann offer a 'weaker' alternative:

> The attempt to uncover the complex foundations of an identity or culture is not necessarily an attack on authenticity. It may be just what it says it is: an attempt to see where that identity and culture come from, to plumb their complexities…ltures and collective identities are constructed, pieced together out of history, tradition, experience, myth, and a host of other sources. The result is no less authentic for being a construction. On the contrary, all cultures and collective identities are constructions of one sort or another; they are changed and reformulated – continually reconstructed – over time. It is this very constructedness that is the source of their dynamism.[36]

If there remains some difficulty with accepting that an artificial construct is still authentic, then Cornell and Hartmann, in at least a partial return to the primordialist position, argue that constructions cannot just be fabrications built on thin air.[37] That is, there has to be a foundation, and this is usually provided by what the primordialists identify as the basis of ethnicity: shared geographical origin, common history, shared memories and patterns of behaviour. To these can be added discriminatory treatment by outsiders.[38] The result is a version of ethnicity which is a synthesis of the various approaches.[39]

As mentioned previously, the terms 'ethnic group', 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic identity' are now in common and popular usage. Their familiarity and commonality can easily lead to the belief that their meanings are self-evident and

common sense. Unfortunately this is far from the truth and it has now been shown that ethnicity is not one but a set of concepts around which there is considerable discussion and disagreement. In each case, however, the aim is to address a number of basic questions. When is a group an ethnic group and when is it not? How does an ethnic group differ from a racial group? Is ethnicity about objective factors or subjective feelings? Is ethnicity natural and innate or imposed and constructed? Is ethnicity about the past/history or the present/experience? These questions focus attention on a number of key themes:

- the origins and formation of ethnic groups;
- the nature or markers of ethnicity and ethnic identity;
- whether ethnic identities are single, uniform and unified;
- the nature of boundaries, and whether they are fixed or fluid;
- whether ethnicity is dependent on minority status;
- how and why ethnic identities are maintained.

Groups are formed by a combination of internal and external factors. For most commentators on ethnicity it is essential that members of a group are themselves active in and conscious of the processes of forming boundaries and identities and that they engage in collective actions. For Cornell and Hartmann, following in the tradition of Barth, this is what distinguishes an ethnic category from an ethnic group.[40] The reasons for group formation can be various: a natural and emotional bonding (primordialist), self-forming in defence of specific interests (situationalist), or self-forming as a response to opposition and hostility from the wider society.[41]

It is in this sense that ethnic groups are self-conscious populations: people have to be aware that they belong to an ethnic group. Such an awareness forms a bond of unity which has been stimulated by memories of a shared historical past, a sense of common origins, shared activities and culture, and regular social interaction. The importance given to self-consciousness is clearly understandable, but it does leave some questions unanswered. How many of the group have to be self-conscious of their ethnic identity? Can someone still be a member even though his or her self-consciousness may be immature or unformed? How strongly felt is the ethnic attachment? Do all members of the group have to share the same notions of origins, culture, history and boundaries?

Also, as well as being self-forming, the boundaries and identities of minority groups are decided and imposed by outsiders through 'externally located processes of social categorisation'.[42] A number of agencies can be involved in this, but by far the most significant is the state, usually as part of the process of defining its citizens through such devices as immigration laws and legal definitions of nationality. However, the state, both historically and in the present, also engages in defining groups and constructing boundaries when identifying peoples for purposes of persecution or protection from persecution. The state, by defining criminal behaviour, also defines criminals. Race relations legislation

requires a definition of ethnicity which will include some groups but exclude others. In more extreme cases, such as under Nazism, specific groups were singled out, defined and labelled for persecution. The actions and decisions of the state give legitimacy to the definitions and boundaries, which, mostly, become enshrined in law and subsequently accepted, largely without question, by the general public.

In order to establish ethnicity it is essential that the specifics of group identity, the markers of ethnicity, are clearly established. While no two commentators entirely share the same list of criteria, or even the priority that should be given to the various components, it is nevertheless the case that a number of common elements feature prominently. Also, it should be noted at the outset that ethnicity depends not just on one or other of the criteria to be listed and examined below, but on a combination of most. This means, for example, that although students may share certain practices and beliefs in common, an element of ethnicity, this is insufficient to qualify them for the status of ethnic group as they lack most, if not all, of the other components. One of the earliest definitions of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' was provided by the German sociologist Max Weber in 1922:

> We shall call an 'ethnic group' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relation exists.[43]

This definition gives importance to physical type and ideas of common descent, customs and culture. The subjective element is brought to the fore by his mention of beliefs and memories, and the importance of external factors and relations with other groups in forming group identity is suggested by the role given to colonisation and migration. Understandably, given the date of writing, Weber had still not managed to break entirely free from race thinking and its emphasis on physical type, but in other respects he anticipated subsequent theories of ethnicity by considering both the cultural content of ethnicity and the importance of subjective belief over objective fact. Most subsequent attempts at definition make similar reference to ancestry, memory, history and culture, but the balance between them remains the subject of continued debate.

The overlapping notions of common origin in time and place, descent and ancestry are included in most of the definitions of ethnicity.[44] The disagreement, though, is whether this is 'real' and 'factual' or 'putative' and 'assumed', or whether it can be either. For some common descent/origin/ancestry is a fact that can be proven by establishing actual blood lines and ties through genealogical enquiry. Family trees and kinship networks are explored through family names and ancestry, and origins are established. For others, the 'fact' is less important

than the belief, and if a people think they share a descent because of physical similarities or shared culture and historical experiences, then this is sufficient.[45] Whether real or putative, the notion of shared origins provides the geographical, spiritual and emotional bond that ties a people together. For diaspora peoples in particular, such as Gypsies and Jews, the notion of such homelands is of central importance, and, paradoxically, the further from the homeland in time and distance, the more remote the memory, and the more imprecise and uncertain the ability to 'prove' precise origins and ancestry, the more central they become to identity.

A second and major marker of ethnicity is provided by the notion of shared culture and commitment to a distinctive way of life which is then transmitted to the children. Such an analysis contributes to a commonly held assumption, in the public mind if not among the academic community, that ethnicity is *simply* a matter of culture. Although most analysts do not adopt such an extreme position and would normally include origins, descent and kinship in their definition, culture remains a constant. Broadly this is taken to refer to language, traditions, history (which includes a shared and known past with heroic figures, key events and their commemoration, dramatic experiences and relations with other groups) and distinctive economic activities, medical practices, religious and other forms of behaviour, value systems, taboos, rituals and beliefs, dress and diet.[46]

The difficulty, as previously, concerns whether ethnic distinctiveness has to be found in all these aspects of culture or whether it can be found, reduced, in an essential core, whether kinship patterns, geographical concentration, shared meaning, religious affiliation or language. This means that difference from other ethnic groups, or more usually from the majority society in which the ethnic minority find themselves, does not have to be found in all aspects of life and culture, and that in certain areas there is overlap and no distinction. Cornell and Hartmann pursue this line and argue that it is the *symbolic* importance of cultural difference rather than the *actual* practice which is important. This is a crucial movement away from more traditional definitions of ethnicity: for a set of people to be identified as an ethnic group they need only to point to cultural practices which are different from those of the majority society and so which take on symbolic importance, even if these occupy only a tiny proportion of the cultural practices and activities of the group, with the larger proportion hardly differing at all.

Although physical differences formed the main defining feature of racial classification, they feature less prominently among writers on ethnicity. Part of the explanation for this must be the desire of these writers to disassociate themselves from the arguments of racial theorists about the significance of physiological variation. However, it is impossible to ignore physical difference as one of the many markers of ethnicity. Just as differences in language and culture have their roots in different origins, so also does physical variation between peoples. The ethnic classification endeavours to break the connection

between physiognomy and other factors, such as intelligence or culture, thus removing the pejorative overtones associated with race.

Finally, some, but not all, commentators believe that minority status is an essential component of ethnic identity: that an ethnic group is a 'collectivity', 'sub-population' or 'segment' within a larger society. However, to see ethnic groups as sub-national groupings is to deny ethnicity to majority or larger national groupings which conform to the criteria identified above. Indeed, a main aim of many ethnic groups is to achieve their own polity and nation in which they would form the majority. A group or population does not suddenly stop being an ethnic group when this is achieved, as is perhaps best illustrated by the example of Jews and the creation of the Israeli state.

If the above summary of ethnic markers provides the means for identifying groups and boundaries, there still remain to be considered the ways in which those defining criteria and boundaries can be blurred. When referring to any set of people as a group, whether ethnic or of some other kind, the tendency is to focus only on those elements the members have in common. While this is of course perfectly understandable and acceptable, it also takes attention away from the existence of differences *within* the group. The problem that remains is the degree and nature of heterogeneity permissible within an ethnic group for it still to retain that label. The emphasis on common or shared elements and a reluctance to recognise differences and variations within a group is especially in evidence when the markers of identity have been decided by outsiders. To recognise and accommodate difference is to add an unwelcome complexity for those outsiders, the state or otherwise, who decide on and construct the group boundaries. This has as a normal consequence a failure to accept the importance of the range of competing identities which can be found within any group, whether of class, place of birth or even physical difference. This has become an issue of especial importance to the second and subsequent generations of immigrants. This group, born in a country and culture different from that of their parents, is often described as being between two cultures, which easily translates into the idea of being between two ethnicities. In many cases these children draw from both cultures and, arguably, they have two identities/ethnicities. To an extent, then, this becomes a generational issue. When a particular individual, or even a generation of individuals, finds that in almost all areas of life he or she adopts the ways and culture of the host nation rather than that of their parents and yet in other respects remains of the parents' ethnic group by ancestry, then the confusion concerning boundaries becomes apparent.

In many ways the notion of being between cultures or ethnicities is to address the problem of the extent to which boundaries are fluid and flexible. In the late 1960s Fredrik Barth transformed the nature of the study of ethnicity with his work on precisely this issue. Rather than concentrating on what fell within the boundaries, Barth was concerned with the boundaries themselves. This inevitably was an implicit concern of anyone concerned with trying to identify and define group characteristics, from the time of the racial theorists onwards. In contrast

with most preceding formulations, Barth presented a convincing argument about the variability and permeability of ethnic boundaries.[47] The importance of this is that it challenged the widely held views about the unchanging and static nature of identity: instead, the nature of the groups could themselves change and the boundaries could shift, transforming their identity and the features which epitomised their peoplehood.

Discussion about two cultures and boundary fluidity alludes to the wider issue of how ethnic identity can be, and is, maintained. This is an evident problem for diaspora populations, travelling in different directions, establishing themselves for varying lengths of time in various host societies, and progressively moving further, geographically, spiritually and symbolically, from their common origins. Settlement, permanent or temporary, in other lands and cultures inevitably results in varying degrees of intermixing and assimilation. It is possible that a diaspora population or immigrant group will in many respects also take on the ways, beliefs and culture of the host nation. Such a possibility, or likelihood, is strengthened when the period of settlement becomes less and less of a temporary nature. Increasingly, in such situations, the ethnic group will have to resort to various strategies in order to secure the continuance of their ethnicity. This can be achieved by establishing the core or essence of the group, such as Judaism for Jews, or by promoting common actions, setting up ethnic associations and favouring marriage within the group.

Clearly, the warnings given by the analysts and scholars about the problematic nature of the concept of ethnicity need to be taken very seriously. Equally, it is apparent that this discussion has only scraped along the rough terrain travelled by the experts. The main purpose, though, has been to reveal some of the areas that need to be explored when considering how Gypsy ethnicity has been presented. The starting point for this is the battle to have Gypsy ethnicity legally accepted in Britain.

The legal battle for ethnicity

The issue of how Gypsies are defined nowhere takes on more significance than in law. Not only does the legal definition shape and determine popular perceptions, but it also provides the basis of the official treatment of the group. Some of these issues were examined in Chapter 3 when we considered the various pieces of legislation relating to Gypsies in the early modern period. Essentially the aim of the state was to identify groups who were to fall inside and outside the parameters of criminality. In the post-1945 period, issues of nomadism, vagrancy and land use remained a major official concern and these continue to have an effect on how Gypsies are officially defined by the state; these will be examined in a later chapter. However, for our present purposes, another significant post-war development also had a major bearing on official definitions and responses. Under the Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968 and 1976, any actions which had as their consequence the unequal treatment, directly

or indirectly, of anyone for reasons of a person's racial, national or ethnic origin were deemed a criminal offence. In relation to the Gypsies, the key question was whether they fitted the definition of groups accorded protection under the provisions of the statutes. The scope and applicability of the legislation were tested when a sign was put up outside a public house stating 'No Travellers'. As a result, in 1988 an action was brought before the County Court by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), a body created by the 1976 Race Relations Act, against a Mr Dutton, landlord of an East London public house, the Cat and Mutton.[48] In order to determine whether the sign and the refusal to serve travellers were a deliberate attempt to discriminate on grounds of race or ethnic origin, made illegal under Section 29(1) of the 1976 Race Relations Act, a sequence of questions had to be answered: Were Travellers an ethnic group? Were 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller' synonymous? Were Gypsies an ethnic group?

The merits of the arguments for ethnicity were largely based on the precedent that had been set by the definition and criteria given in the case of *Mandla (Seura Singh) v. Dowell Lee* in 1983.[49] Lord Fraser of Tullybelton stated that 'ethnicity' should be understood in a broad cultural/historical sense and for this he drew on a ruling in a case heard by the New Zealand Court of Appeal:

> a group is identifiable in terms of its ethnic origins if it is a segment of the population distinguished from others by a sufficient combination of shared customs, beliefs, traditions and characteristics derived from a common or presumed common past, even if not drawn from what in biological terms is a common racial stock. It is that combination which gives them an historically determined social identity in their own eyes and in the eyes of those outside the group. They have a distinct social identity based not simply on group cohesion and solidarity but also on their belief as to their historical antecedents.[50]

Following this judgement Lord Fraser stated that for a group to constitute an ethnic group it must regard itself, and be regarded by others, as a distinct community deriving from the possession of certain characteristics. Of these some were seen as essential while others were not, but the possession of one or more of them helped to further distinguish the group from others. Two essential features were identified: first, a group must show evidence of a long, shared and distinctive history, of which they are conscious and the memory of which they keep alive. Second, the group must show that they have their own distinctive cultural traditions, which include family and social customs and manners, which may or may not be associated with religious beliefs. Other non-essential ethnic characteristics were also identified, including a common geographical origin or descent from a small number of common ancestors; a common language, though this did not have to be peculiar to the group; a common literature; a common religion distinct from neighbouring groups or from the general community; and, finally, being a (persecuted) minority within a larger society.[51]

Following consideration of evidence provided by the CRE, one Gypsy witness (Peter Mercer) and two expert witnesses (Thomas Acton and Donald Kenrick), Judge Percy Harris found that travellers were not synonymous with Gypsies, and that neither should be defined as a racial or ethnic group.[52] In the view of Judge Harris, travellers and Gypsies met neither of the two essential and 'barely any' of the non-essential criteria, and so the claim that they should be seen as an ethnic group was rejected.[53] Instead, he confirmed the legal definition of the Gypsy as contained in the 1968 Caravan Sites Act: that Gypsies were people 'of a nomadic habit of life'.[54] The case of the CRE was rejected and the action against the landlord of the public house was dismissed.

The case then went to appeal.[55] An important component of the appeal ruling concerned the extent to which the Gypsies had become absorbed into the host population. It was conceded that it was inappropriate to claim that, centuries after the first Gypsy migrants left India, the present-day population could claim to be of the same racial stock. It was also recognised that not all Gypsies were nomadic and that some had assimilated into the larger community. However, the testimony provided by Peter Mercer in the original hearing was used as evidence that the Gypsies had not merged wholly with the indigenous population and had retained a separateness and a self-awareness of still being Gypsies.[56] Also, although the appeal judges accepted some of the original doubts about the testimonies of the expert witnesses, Acton and Kenrick, they also accepted that their arguments concerning historical migrations, settlement and customs were not refuted by any contrary evidence. The Court of Appeal, consisting of the Lord Justices Stocker, Nicholls and Taylor, confirmed the original finding that the meaning of 'Traveller', although it depended on the context in which it was used, was not synonymous with 'Gypsy'. However, significantly, Lord Justices Nicholls and Taylor and also, though more reluctantly, Lord Justice Stocker overturned the view of Judge Percy Harris in relation to Gypsy ethnicity. Their ruling was that Gypsies did constitute an ethnic group as they satisfied the key criteria for ethnicity, incorporating the two essential features identified in the case of *Mandla v. Dowell Lee* and also some, though not all, of the additional non-essential characteristics. In summary, the ruling was that Gypsies possessed:

- a long shared history;
- a historically determined social identity;
- common geographical origins in North India and a pattern of migration through Persia;
- certain – 'albeit limited' – customs, including in relation to cooking and the manner of washing;
- distinctive cultural features, notably traditional style of dressing and of furnishing their caravans, which meant they had not been absorbed into the general population;
- their own language, combining Romany with English, and dialect;

- a repertoire of folktales and music passed from one generation to another (though not a common literature or religion).[57]

The case of the *CRE v. Dutton* reveals the complexity of the problems that surround the broad issue of Gypsy identity and arguments around ethnicity in particular. To begin with, the criteria for inclusion in and exclusion from ethnic groups had to be established by law. While Fraser was able to identify seven characteristics of ethnicity which would largely be shared by most commentators, and so provided a reasonable basis for judgement, the problems do not end with such a listing. The continued conflation of racial and ethnic categorisation in the summaries of the judges indicates that a conceptual differentiation had not been made. Moreover, the suggestion that the seven features provide a checklist which can be ticked against objective and observable truths is misleading and does not allow for important differences in the analysis and interpretation of Gypsy history and culture.

For example, while Lord Fraser's definition of ethnicity incorporated the key elements of the New Zealand ruling, the notion of a *'presumed* common past [my emphasis]' and a *'belief'* in historical antecedents is missing. That is, the Fraser ruling assumed the *fact* of a common past rather than viewing it as something which might have been constructed, even though it should be remembered that an imagined past, based on myth and presumption rather than factual evidence, may be no less forceful in terms of group identity and cohesion. The difficulties in establishing the 'truths' or 'facts' about a shared past are perhaps best revealed by the treatment given to the expert witnesses. Rather than accepting the arguments and evidence of these noted Gypsy academics as factual and objective truths, they were dismissed for their subjectivity and bias. To an extent, assumptions and preconceived notions are in evidence on both sides, and the impact of these on subsequent legal judgements should not be underestimated.[58]

Furthermore, the case brought to light other problems relating to group identity and membership caused by settlement, assimilation and absorption, and the fluidity of the boundaries around the group. Interestingly, the Fraser definition allowed for converts and for persons marrying into the group. It was also noted, though, that it was insufficient for a person simply to see him- or herself as a member, and acceptance by the group of that person was identified as a condition. Thus, a person could be a member of the group by virtue of their birth, marriage or else by adherence to group norms and practices and their acceptance by other group members. In this way the boundaries of the group are being opened up and made fluid, though it is not clear if the movement operated two ways, with people able to move out of, as well as into, the group. However, significantly, the appeal ruling permitted settlement and 'absorption into the larger community' without ethnicity being undermined.[59]

Self-identification and Gypsy politics

Despite the problems for outsiders in gaining access to the 'authentic voice' of the Gypsies, the identity that Gypsies have of themselves remains a critical area for investigation. Indeed, self-perception has been identified as one of the key components of ethnic classification: for an ethnic group to exist, its members have to consciously be aware of and contribute to the shared identity. This presents an immediate problem in relation to Gypsies as the most common forms of, and so sources for, self-perception are to be found in some form of regular, organised or institutional activity, whether political or cultural. Gypsy culture, as is often remarked, is primarily oral. There are very few documentary or institutional records originating from and left by the group, and historically there is little in the way of shared organisational activity.

In order to try and overcome this deficiency, the favoured alternative for many commentators and researchers, with varying degrees of commitment and success, was to go to the people themselves. It has been shown previously how this took many forms, from occasional meetings and interviews to adopting their way of life, joining the group and living with and as Gypsies for varying amounts of time. However, it was also noted that these attempts to discover the Gypsies' own voice, however genuine they might have been, were mediated through the eyes, ears, mouths and assumptions of outsiders. Inevitably, the picture that emerged was the product of varying degrees of interpretation and distortion. Further, it was also apparent that the members of the group adopted the models, language and labels of the majority society when describing themselves and their relations with others.

However, this relative silence on the part of the group itself has begun to change in recent years. The emergence of Gypsy political organisations, associations and pressure groups in the 1950s and 1960s announced the entry of Gypsies themselves into the processes of identity construction. Subsequently, increasing numbers of Gypsies have entered into the world of printed communication, as scholars, writers, poets, artists and film-makers, and through such sources it is possible to get some perspective on Gypsy self-perception through a combination of self-produced actions, images and words.

Gypsy political organisation: international

Although the first international Romani Congress was held in Bucharest in 1934, it was not until after the Second World War that the movement gathered any pace.[60] The main factors that are said to have contributed to the emergence of Gypsy organisations in this period include the issue of war reparations, the deteriorating post-war situation of Gypsy populations, and the growth of a wider movement for human rights among other linguistic and ethnic minorities, in particular the USA civil rights movement.[61] In Britain, from the 1960s the context for organisation was prepared by the emergence of minority politics in

the form of black radicalism in Britain, a heightened awareness of race relations issues and the beginnings of race relations legislation, and a general climate in the 1960s and early 1970s of protest, petitions and demands for change.

The beginnings of the post-war political organisation of Gypsies emerged in Germany in the 1950s.[62] The attempt to achieve respect for the Gypsy way of life and culture, and to gain recognition of their status as an ethnic group, was then picked up by various emerging Romani civil rights organisations.[63] The Organisation Nationale Gitane and the Communauté Mondial Gitane (CMG), later called the Comité International Tsigane (CIT), were founded in Paris in the mid 1960s.[64] The utopian ideal of the CIT was for a Gypsy homeland, but its more practical and immediate purpose was to secure war reparations from Germany and to campaign, by publicity and lobbying, against the injustices suffered by Gypsies.[65] During the later 1960s and 1970s Gypsy organisations were founded in many European states and the CIT acted as a co-ordinating organisation for these scattered groups. By 1972 the Federation consisted of twenty-three separate national organisations.[66] In April 1971 the CIT organised the First World Romani Congress, funded by the World Council of Churches and the Indian government.[67] The Congress was held in London,[68] and consisted of forty Gypsy delegates from fourteen East and West European countries. In order to establish unity among Gypsies everywhere the label 'Rom' was adopted, a flag was designed (blue and green with a red wheel) and the slogan 'Gypsies Arise!' was taken up.[69] The terms Tsiganes, Zigeuner, Gitanos and Gypsy were rejected for their derogatory and pejorative overtones, and the term 'Romany' was adopted in their place, which also resulted in the change of name to Comité International Rom.[70] In a speech by Slobodan Berberski, Gypsies were identified as being engaged in a struggle for liberation, whose objectives were identified as emancipation, the preservation of their own forms of education and culture, and the forging of a future 'in accordance with our lifestyle and beliefs'.[71] All Roma were declared brothers *[sic]* and a secretariat and executive body were established. In short, the Congress provided the necessary organisational structure, language, symbols and objectives for the development of an ethnic group identity. The final point of a ten-point programme declared:

> In view of the love and brotherhood which have been the evident sign of unity between the Gypsies of different countries represented here, we make public recognition of the spirit of a united people which inspires us all, strengthening us in the knowledge that we are one Rom people who consider the sufferings and joys of our brothers as our own suffering and joy.[72]

The success of the committee in stimulating a wider consciousness and awareness is indicated by the increase in the numbers of delegates to sixty, representing twenty-six countries, by the time of the Second Congress in Geneva in April 1978.[73] One achievement of the Congress was the creation of a

permanent body, the Romani Union.[74] Also, the Congress confirmed India as the 'mother country' and the Roma as a national minority of Indian origins. Significantly, this position on origins was supported by the Indian Mission in Geneva, and this became an important part of the successful campaign to achieve recognition of their ethnic identity and also as a national minority within the socialist states. The Romano Ekhipé (Romani Union) was eventually granted consultative status within the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1979, and delegates were subsequently elected to both the United Nations Human Rights Commission and UNESCO.[75] Gypsies were now becoming more active and demonstrative in challenging prejudice, and increasingly they used the source of much of this history of misrepresentation, the mass media, as the chosen medium for transmitting their message. However, rather contrary to such displays of unity, the Congress was also marked by sharp internal disputes. A third conference was held in Göttingen, Germany, in May 1981, where the main theme was Nazi persecution. By the time of the Third Congress all the components and statements about a shared identity which transcended all national borders were present and the Gypsies had in place the traditional symbols of a united nationhood with the symbolic flag and anthem. The idea of a separate Romani nation was growing and strengthening.[76]

At the Fourth World Romani Congress in Serock, near Warsaw, Poland, in April 1990, a commission was appointed to plan the eventual publication of a Romani-language encyclopaedia. A reference book on Gypsies, and, importantly, for Gypsies, was a major step both in contributing to a sense of shared history and experience and in developing a distinctive literary tradition which had for so long been absent. The 1990s also witnessed other attempts to create a pan-European organisation, and increasingly the Gypsy rights movement operated within the wider European and international context provided by the Council of Europe, the European Union, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In November 1990 the idea of a European Rom Parliament was proposed, and in the following year a European Committee of the Romani Union was created.[77] The late 1990s witnessed growing divisions within the International Romani Union and criticisms appeared concerning the undemocratic practices of its East European leaders and its abandonment of ideals in favour of anachronistic posturing.[78] But despite the divisions another Congress was held in Prague in July 2000, the first for a decade, and once again identity and nationhood were central themes. The declared intention of the Gypsies was to declare themselves a 'non-territorial' nation and to achieve international recognition.[79]

Gypsy organisations: England

The formation of Gypsy political organisations in England was undoubtedly stimulated by the work and activities of Norman Dodds, Labour MP for the constituency of Dartford from 1945 until his death in 1965.[80] A major part of

Dodds' parliamentary career was spent fighting for justice for the Gypsies and, as part of this struggle, he and William Larmour, an ex-London City Missionary to itinerants, set up the Gypsy Committee.[81] A nine-point Charter was drawn up in 1947 and Dodds regularly advertised the plight of the Gypsies by his questions and speeches in the House of Commons and his national campaign for Gypsy rights.[82]

The next stage in the evolution of Gypsy politics and of a 'Gypsy civil rights movement' also involved a non-Gypsy, the journalist Grattan Puxon.[83] In December 1966 Puxon formed the CIT-affiliated Gypsy Council. Puxon, who served as secretary from 1966 to 1971, and Hughie Smith, president, led the campaign for equal rights to education, work and houses, for camping sites in every county open to all travellers, and for equal standing through respect between Gypsies and settled non-Gypsies.[84] The strategies adopted to achieve these aims were of a practical and direct nature and included lobbying, resisting evictions, organising Gypsies to claim rights and to establish their right to live according to their own ways and customs, and publishing their own journal, *Romano Drom*.[85] Organisations, associations and councils emerged which claimed or suggested national representation. These included, for example, the National Gypsy Education Council, formed in 1970, the National Gypsy Council, an all-Gypsy organisation,[86] and in 1972 the Romany Guild was formed as an organisation 'of Gypsies only, speaking for themselves'.[87] Their objectives were of an immediate and practical nature and were primarily concerned with achieving education for their children, regional and site committees, and more and better permanent and transit sites.[88] However, the history of Gypsy political organisation is one of internal disputes and divisions and in the 1970s the drift was away from national organisation towards local or regional activity, often under the organisational auspices of a single person. Such organisations included the Southern Gypsy Council, Peter Mercer's Association of Gypsy and Romani Organisations,[89] the Romani Site Owners' Guild, the Romani Guild of Kent, Charlie Smith's Essex Romani Association, Eli Frankham's Romani Rights Association, the Advisory Council for the Education of Romanies and other Travellers (1972), the Northern Gypsy Council, the National Association of Gypsy Women, Alf Cooper's Labour Campaign for Travellers' Rights, and the Gypsy Council for Education, Culture, Welfare and Civil Rights (1992), which was the largest of Britain's Gypsy organisations at the time and was chaired by Charlie Smith, with Peter Mercer serving as president.[90]

Politics, rights and ethnicity

The development of Gypsy political organisation occurred in stages: from its emergence in the 1960s and the development of international links, to the 'development and disagreements' which marked the Geneva Congress, to consolidation by the 1980s.[91] For our present purposes, the main significance of the national and international developments is that the very fact of organisation

itself has contributed to the process of ethnicity building in that it serves to draw Gypsies together, make them aware of shared interests with others and provide a sense of international solidarity.[92] Furthermore, organisation acts as the basis for self-defence, as a means to combat and challenge persecution in all its forms, and to continue the fight for the recognition of Gypsy rights. A main aim, therefore, was to join together, ideologically and politically if not physically, the previously fragmented Gypsy groups. By focusing on Indian origins, having a strategy for political action and encouraging the growth of an independent Gypsy culture, political organisation has contributed in a major way to the development of Gypsy ethnicity. Not only have the organisations served to unify the political demands of the Gypsies, but they have also provided the language, rhetoric and symbols of a united people. The language of unity and single identity was thus being created out of specific political imperatives and ambitions. As mentioned by Angus Fraser, '[t]here is the beginning of a new awareness of the historical and cultural ties that Gypsies share'.[93] The argument being presented by Fraser is that the ties were already there but it was only with the emergence of political organisations that Gypsies themselves became more fully aware of their existence and importance. It could be argued, therefore, that it was only from this time that a more fully formed ethnic identity and ethnic awareness emerged.

This growth in Gypsy political activity is strongly linked with the flourishing of a Gypsy nationalism, although one in which the nation is located in past origins rather than present geographical territory, and in which nationalist rhetoric is intended to build an identity which exists over and above the ties and identities linked to and deriving from the nations in which Gypsies are living. Given the tribal, regional and national differences that exist within the Gypsy population, this common national identity is something which has had to be built, largely by the Gypsy politicians and activists, rather than something which has organically grown from the people themselves. A main purpose of this activity and ideology has been to combat racism, discrimination and scapegoating by 'bringing together the diverse Gypsy groups of different countries into a common Romani identity based on culture'.[94]

It can be argued, then, that the very existence of these organisations emerged from, and significantly contributed to, a sense of the Gypsies' own distinctive ethnic identity. A major part of their purpose has been to secure a proper definition of the people and to establish representations of the group based in reality not myth, stereotype and prejudice. This was seen as the first crucial step to obtaining Gypsy rights. Both the romanticised image and the negative picture of nomads had to be challenged and removed before the ethnic definition became acceptable to a wider non-Gypsy grouping. The success of this endeavour, at a macro level, is perhaps indicated by the interest taken in Gypsy rights by such international organisations as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Community.[95]

This, though, is to present only a part of the story, and there are a number of important qualifications to the image of a unified and single people contained in

the actions, words and programmes of the Gypsy political organisations, and the extent to which this is the product of Gypsies' own perceptions of themselves. To begin with, the political organisation of Gypsies, and the image of the group emanating from this source, still involves non-Gypsies as key players. This is evident in the original impetus given to organisation, and can also be seen in the subsequent history of many of the organisations themselves. Once again, the role of outsiders in shaping and defining Gypsy identity cannot be discounted. Indeed, some Gypsy political organisations have been seen by Gypsies as being manufactured by non-Gypsies and academics 'of dubious intent'.[96] The National Gypsy Council report of 1976 contained more than a hint of resentment at the continued involvement of non-Gypsies in Gypsy affairs and described them as 'hangers on'.[97]

At an international level distinct friction exists between the various representatives and groups over the issue of identity and, especially, over whether the individuals and groups involved are 'real' Gypsies. **As** commented by Angus Fraser, 'the attitudes of Gypsy groups to each other are a contributory factor in the unending debate among outsiders over who should and should not be designated a "true Gypsy"'.[98] Disputes over the validity of claims to Gypsy identity, and so of the right to represent Gypsies, have also been identified by Thomas Acton, who suggested that political differences may have some bearing on the accusations and counter-accusations over identity.[99] Clearly, the area of internal Gypsy politics is one from which most non-Gypsies are excluded. However, there are sufficient references by those who have most contact with the group, supplemented by evidence of splits that have marked the history of Gypsy organisational activity, to accept that the attempt to unite such disparate groups, often suspicious of each other, is one of constant struggle.[100] Splits and antagonisms afflict both the international and national arena of Gypsy politics and within Britain there is said to be intense rivalry among Gypsy and traveller groups.[101] These disputes indicate most clearly that the problems in establishing criteria for inclusion/exclusion are also experienced within the group and that there is no unanimity on where or how the border should be drawn. This makes a sharp contrast, then, with the public statements and rhetoric about Gypsies as a unified brotherhood of people.

This problem is further illustrated if we consider the strategies adopted to overcome regional and national divisions among the Gypsy populations of the world and to establish a common, overriding identity in order to use this as a basis for political action. The issue of boundaries and the criteria for inclusion and exclusion once again become paramount. The institutions and organisations created were, in many ways, a strong assertion of a common Gypsy identity. Yet, by seeking also to include other traveller populations, such as the Irish Travellers (Minceir) and the Jenisch of Switzerland, the concept of ethnicity was again brought into question by the effort to accommodate peoples who were not Gypsies and who did not share the same cultural practices and origins.[102] It is unclear whether the ambition and intention were to provide a political voice for all

underprivileged and victimised traveller and nomadic populations, and so remove Gypsy ethnicity as the basis for action.

It has been shown that a core element in the achievement of ethnic minority status was the construction of an identity based on the notion of national origins. In recent years, though, there has been a small but important movement away from the Romani nationalism of the International Romani Union. Nicolae Gheorghe and Andrzej Mirga reject what they depict as the idealisation and romanticisation of Gypsy identity associated with such symbols as flags and anthems.[103] In other words, the construction of Gypsy identity by Gypsy politicians and intellectuals around notions of nation, and so of common origins, is seen as romanticised myth-making.

Finally, a key concern must be over the representativeness of these bodies at both the international and national levels. This is a question which should be asked of any institution or organisation claiming to represent whole, or even partial, populations, and there are no grounds for simply assuming that Gypsy political organisations are any more representative of the claimed constituency than any other. As in majority society politics, they have been set up and run by the most active and conscious members of the group, and for the most part they remain a minority activity, with the lives of the majority of Gypsies remaining largely untouched by their existence. It is likely that their existence is not even known of by the majority. Michael Stewart, in his study of the Vlach Gypsies in Hungary, found that meetings of Gypsy intellectuals and political leaders had little meaning for the ordinary Gypsy. Also, and most interestingly, he identifies the pursuit of ethnicity as primarily an intellectual activity, albeit with political consequences:

> During the Communist period pressure from Gypsy intellectuals resulted in the granting of a legal status to the Gypsies as an 'ethnic group'. The Gypsies I knew were largely uninterested in this change and feel very little link with the intellectuals who claim to speak on their behalf. While for the intellectuals the common ethnic origin of the Gypsies is genuinely felt and imagined, this is not so for ordinary Gypsies. For them only an identity rooted in joint action in the present is significant. Thus they know that their ancestors are said to come from India but display no interest in this fact.[104]

Elsewhere Stewart offers an explanation for this gap: 'Sometimes it seems that the Romany political parties spend more effort establishing their credibility among non-Gypsy authorities than among their own constituents.'[105] While such a judgement cannot be applied with equal force to all Gypsy organisations, this does tend to confirm the impression given by Nicolae Gheorghe, a Gypsy intellectual and activist himself, who has also commented on the gap between politicians/intellectuals and the rest. He argues further that as well as being apart from the Gypsy community the intellectuals are not seen by them as 'real Gypsies'.[106] There is a very real danger, then, in assuming that the words, images

and ideologies which come from political sources are typical or representative of the whole population.

Cultural forms of self-identity

Accompanying and complementing the growth of Gypsy political organisation has been the increasing involvement of Gypsies in forms of cultural production, and the growing awareness of, and interest in, Gypsy culture was celebrated in 2000 at the Barbican, London, as part of the 1000 Year Journey festival. This can be seen, for example, in the publication of magazines such as *O Drom International,* a worldwide magazine for and about Rom and Sinti. One issue even picked up the theme of identity and interviewed a number of young Gypsies who saw themselves as Gitano/Romni/Rom/Roma/Romani. The contributions to the debates about identity were, though, ambiguous. When asked to identify the main feature that differentiated them from non-Gypsies the replies varied from persecution to culture and traditions. One interviewee thought the difference was primarily emotional, and was something found in the heart, and one further interviewee thought that there were no differences. That is, with the exception of the individual who failed to identify any differences between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, the other respondents relied on similar criteria to those forwarded by non-Gypsy commentators but without any agreement on which of these was the most important. Notably, none of the respondents mentioned origins, diaspora or India. Self-representation in other writings and poetry is similarly ambiguous and uncertain. In a recent anthology of Gypsy writers and poets the overriding theme was the quest for identity, and the images employed were mostly of roads, sky, wind and sun, conveying a rural picture not unlike that presented by the nineteenth-century lorists.[107]

In recent years several films have emerged with Gypsy culture and characters as the main focus, in most cases made by people with Gypsy origins. In 1998 the film *Gadjo Dilo,* by the director Tony Gatlif, who was born in Algeria of Gypsy origin and French nationality, achieved considerable publicity and critical acclaim. This was the third film of a Gypsy trilogy, following on from *Lacho Drom* and *Les Princes. Gadjo Dilo* is the story of Stephane (played by Romain Duris), a young Parisian with some Gypsy ancestry. Stephane travels to Romania in search of his dead father's favourite singer, Nora Luce, and along the way he finds he has a natural affinity with the people and culture of his deceased father. Much emphasis is given to the habits, superstitions and music of the Gypsy people, and we are even presented with the stereotypical Gypsy seductress, Sabina, with the archetypal bright eyes and uncontrollable sexual urges.

Other films include Emir Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsies,* a winner at the Cannes Film Festival, and *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998). The latter was a comedy of scams, swindles and farmyard humour. The offspring of two Serbian Gypsy godfathers steal and bribe vast fortunes from each other, culminating in a plot to hijack a trainload of petrol. The heist is one more chance to outsmart each other,

wryly observed by their amused grandfathers. To this list should also be added Pater Vaclav's *Marian, a Gypsy Life and Black* and *White in Colour, a film* about the Czech Romany singer Vera Bila.

Conclusion

The emergence of Gypsy political organisations appeared to offer the prospect of discovering how Gypsies viewed themselves. For the first time, there emerged a significant institutional basis to their existence. And, to some extent, this hope has been fulfilled in the sense that the hand and ideas of the non-Gypsy are much less in evidence than in any other previous representation of the group. When this is coupled with the material coming from Gypsy writers, artists and film-makers, we are much closer than at any time previously to discovering the authentic voice of the Gypsies and their own perceptions of identity. In marked contrast to their long previous history, Gypsies in the post-war period have at last taken a measure of control over how they are seen and represented in the wider society.

Even so, some caution must still be exercised as the pictures being presented from the Gypsies' own sources still carry with them at least some of the preconceptions, models, ideas, concepts and language taken from the majority society. The influence of non-Gypsies, at the level of active involvement as well as in the sense of providing the parameters and context for all forms of cultural production, remains constant. For these reasons, the search for the pure and uncontaminated 'Voice of the Gypsy' is likely to remain as elusive as it ever has been.

Notes

1 A list of works by these two authors is provided in the bibliography and their differing interpretations will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
2 See Zoltan Barany, 'The poverty of Gypsy studies', *NewsNet. The Newsletter of the AAASS (the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies),* Vol. 40, No. 3, 2000, pp. 1–4; see also the responses from Colin Clark, 'What poverty? A response to Zoltan Barany', *NewsNet. The Newsletter of the AAASS,* Vol. 30, No. 3, 2000, p. 7, and Thomas Acton, 'A response to Zoltan Barany's "The poverty of Gypsy studies"', *NewsNet. The Newsletter of the AAASS,* Vol. 30, No. 3, 2000, pp. 8–9.
3 J. Huxley and A.C. Haddon, *We Europeans: A Survey of 'Racial' Problems* (London, 1935). It should be noted that their use of the term coincided more with the physiological classification associated with race than the later meanings given to ethnicity.
4 The word 'ethnic' has a much longer history, which dates back to the Middle Ages, meaning 'tribe', 'swarm' or 'band'. See J. Hutchinson and A.D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford, 1996), p. 4. They state also that the term 'ethnicity' first appeared in the

English language in the 1950s. Although the word 'ethnic' was used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this was usually used synonymously with 'race'.

5 N. Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800–1960* (London and Basingstoke, 1982), p. 141.

6 R. Benedict, *Race and Racism* (London, 1983; first published 1942). Benedict's earlier work, *Patterns of Culture* (London, 1935), looked at the role of culture in explaining human behaviour. UNESCO sponsored four meetings of scientists on this topic, in 1949, 1951, 1964 and 1967.

7 See chapters 4 and 5 of Benedict (1983).

8 See E. Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge, 1992), Epilogue.

9 See K. Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 15; A. Montague, *Statement on Race: An Annotated Elaboration and Exposition of the Four Statements on Race issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation* (New York, 1972).

10 Malik (1996), p. 90. See also Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Oxford, 1997), p. 67.

11 See M. Banton and J. Harwood, *The Race Concept* (Newton Abbot and London, 1975), pp. 35, 53, 56.

12 Gossett (1997), chapter 7; J.S. Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859–1900* (Urbana, Illinois, and London, 1971), pp. 86–88.

13 See Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1986).

14 In particular, Barkan refers to a lessening of xenophobia within the United States and a growing belief that human problems such as poverty were not caused by innate biological flaws. Barkan also mentions the impact of the Great Depression in undermining middle-class confidence and in furthering a belief in biological equality. See also H.A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal, 1982), p. 128; Kenan Malik adds that the Russian defeat by Japan in 1905 undermined ideas of white superiority, and that further challenges to this came from the growing revolts in the colonies and Third World nationalisms. Malik also mentions the break-up of the white consensus and the breakdown of the social evolutionist and positivist outlooks which had underpinned race thinking. See Malik (1996), pp. 123ff. See also M. Banton and J. Harwood (1975) and M. Banton, 'Race as a social category', *Race,* Vol. 8, No. 1, 1966, pp. 1–16.

15 Mendel's theory has been described as 'a new way of describing the human biological diversity' (Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science,* London, 1995, p. 24), and Boas is said to have 'sought to separate biology from culture and intelligence and so undermine a core component of race thinking' (Stepan, 1982 p. 141). See also M. Biddiss, 'Myths of the blood: European racist ideology 1850–1945', *Patterns of Prejudice,* Vol. ix, No. 5, 1975, pp. 11–19; S. Cornell and D. Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (London, 1998), p. 42; Malik (1996), pp. 120, 150, 151, 157; Gossett (1997), pp. 418–423.

16 Lancelot Hogben, *Race, Reason and Rubbish: An Examination of the Biological Credentials of the Nazi Creed* (London, 1942); Jacques Barzun, *Race: A Study in*

Modern Superstition (London, 1938). See also Stepan (1982), chapter 6; Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore and London, 1996), pp. 372–373.

17 Malik (1996) refers to the functionalist, structuralist, historicist and diffusionist theories.

18 Gossett (1997), p. 430.

19 MacDougall (1982), p. 128.

20 For example, in the immediate post-war period American scientists sought to 'refute the Nazi nonsense', but this was followed by a period when the debates went into decline. Between 1962 and 1964 the debate on the utility of race was revived in the journal *Current Anthropology* and a Symposium of the American Association for Advancement of Science was held in December 1966 in order to build an inventory of the then current scientific thinking on race. See M. Mead, T. Dobzhansky, E. Tobach and R.E. Light (eds), *Science and the Concept of Race* (New York and London, 1968).

21 J. Hutchinson and A.D. Smith (eds), *Ethnicity* (Oxford, 1996), p. 5.

22 Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London, 1997), p. 61.

23 Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen (eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 6–7. Similarly, Cornell and Hartmann state that 'terms such as ethnic, ethnic group, and ethnicity are in fact slippery and difficult to define' and that '[i]t is most unlikely that any one definition of ethnic group or ethnicity will satisfy all the specialists or fully escape the ambiguities that seem an inevitable part of the study of ethnicity'. See Cornell and Hartmann (1998), pp. 16, 18–19. Kenan Malik writes, '[l]ike race, ethnicity is a term that is used in a fairly promiscuous way, without there ever being a consensus as to its meaning, and there continue to be fierce debates among sociologists and anthropologists as what exactly ethnicity is'. See Malik (1996), p. 174. Hutchinson and Smith comment that conflict and confusion are caused by 'the failure to find any measure of agreement about what the central concepts of ethnicity signify or how they should be used'. See Hutchinson and Smith (1996), p. 15.

24 See the Bentley/Yelvington exchanges: G.C. Bentley, 'Ethnicity as practice', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol. 29, No. 1, January 1987, pp. 24–55; G.C. Bentley, 'Responses to Yelvington', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol. 33, No. 1, January 1991, pp. 169–175; K.A. Yelvington, 'Ethnicity as practice? A comment on Bentley', *Comparative Studies in History and Society,* Vol. 33, No. 1, 1991, pp. 158–168. As noted by Peter Radcliffe, in a remarkably understated manner, 'it is clear that in both "popular" and academic discourse much confusion surrounds the concept of ethnicity'. See Peter Radcliffe, 'Conceptualising "race", ethnicity and nation: towards a comparative perspective', in Peter Radcliffe (ed.), *'Race', Ethnicity and Nation: International Perspectives on Social Conflict* (London, 1994), p. 6.

25 For an excellent survey of the progression of scholarly debates, see Govers (1997).

26 J.D. Eller and R.M. Coughlan, 'The poverty of primordialism: the demystification of ethnic attachments', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 16, No. 2, April 1993, p. 186. Eller and Coughlan provide a very useful and critical discussion of primordialism, and they conclude that the term is 'unsociological', 'empirically indefensible' and 'theoretically vacuous', and call for it to be dropped from the

'sociological lexicon'. See Eller and Coughlan, 'The poverty of primordialism', p. 187. See also Jones (1997), pp. 65–72.

27 These bullet points are a loose paraphrasing from Jones (1997), pp. 68–71. See also Cornell and Hartmann (1998), pp. 49–52.

28 F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (Boston, 1969); N. Glazer and D.P. Moynihan (eds), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); T.H. Eriksen, *Us and Them in Modern Societies: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius, Trinidad and Beyond* (Oslo, 1992); M. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536–1966* (Berkeley, 1975). See also R. Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: The British and Others* (London, 1994); Jones (1997), pp. 72–79.

29 This has also been termed the structuralist or instrumentalist perspective.

30 For a comparison of primordialist and circumstantialist perspectives, see Cornell and Hartmann (1998), pp. 58–69. See also G.C. Bentley, 'Ethnicity and practice', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol. 29, 1987, pp. 24–55; James McKay, 'An exploratory synthesis of primordial and mobilisation approaches to ethnic phenomena', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 5, 1982, pp. 395–420; G.M. Scott, Jr, A resynthesis of the primordial and circumstantialist approaches to ethnic group solidarity: towards an explanatory model', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 13, 1990, pp. 147–171; Kevin A. Yelvington, 'Ethnicity as practice: a comment on Bentley', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol. 33, 1991, pp. 158–168.

31 Jones (1997), pp. 76–79.

32 See the earlier discussion of this in Chapter 2.

33 Cornell and Hartmann (1998), pp. 72, 90; see also A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy', *Public Culture,* Vol. 2, 1990, pp. 1–24; W. Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World* (Thousand Oaks, California, 1994). See also Eller and Coughlan, 'The poverty of primordialism', and Govers and Vermeulen (1997) for a discussion.

34 They also note that '[t]he term constructionism…neither implies the existence of a school nor exclusively refers to a movement. It is used to indicate changes in the study of ethnicity in a much broader sense.' See Govers and Vermeulen (1997), p. 2.

35 *Ibid.,* pp. 20–21.

36 Cornell and Hartmann (1998), p. 92.

37 This same point is made by Yelvington ('Ethnicity as practice: a comment on Bentley', p. 165). He also refers to the idea of the 'social construction of primordiality'. See also Van den Berghe, 'Does race matter?', *Nations and Nationalism,* Vol. 1, No. 3, 1995, pp. 359–368. A key extract is reproduced by Hutchinson and Smith:

> A myth of ethnicity will only be believed if members of an ethnic group are sufficiently alike in physical appearance and culture, and have lived together and intermarried for a sufficient period for the myth to have developed a substantial measure of historical truth.
>
> (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996, p. 58)

38 Cornell and Hartmann (1998), p. 92. An obvious parallel is with national identities where a sense of Englishness, or Scottishnesss or Welshness, based on invented traditions and myths, is no less real for being constructed.

39 A similar preference for such a synthesis can also be found in the work of Siân Jones and Steve Fenton. See Jones (1997) and Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture* (Basingstoke, 1999).

40

> Others may assign to us an ethnic identity, but what they establish by doing so is an ethnic category. It is our own claim to that identity that makes us an ethnic group. The ethnic category is externally defined, but the ethnic group is internally defined.
>
> (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998, p. 20)

See also R. Jenkins, 'Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorisation, and power', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 2, 1994, pp. 200–201.

41 Eller and Coughlan, 'The poverty of primordialism', p. 190.

42 Jenkins, 'Rethinking ethnicity: identity categorisation and power', pp. 197–223.

43 This quotation is taken from a 1922 essay by Weber. See Hutchinson and Smith (1996), pp. 35–40. See also Govers and Vermeulen (1997), p. 5, and Cornell and Hartmann (1998), pp. 16–17.

44 '[I]n practice, descent from a common homeland often serves as a broad assertion of common ancestry' (Cornell and Hartmann (1998), p. 19).

45 Max Weber, in his classic definition of ethnic groups, talks instead of a subjective belief in common descent.

46 See Jenkins, 'Rethinking ethnicity: identity, categorisation and power', pp. 216–218.

47 See Barth (1969); Jenkins (1994).

48 For a useful summary account of the race relations legislation and the CRE, see John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1989), chapter 4.

49 2 A.C. 548,562; see also A. Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 6–7; *Times Law Reports,* 29 July 1988.

50 The judgement of J. Richardson, New Zealand Court of Appeal in *King-Ansell v. Police* [1979] 2 NZLR.531.543, reported in *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, p. 26.

51 *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, p. 26.

52 See *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, p. 18.

53

> Although there may be a Romany language, [and] some may be able to trace their ancestry back to people who came to England many hundreds of years ago, the language does not seem to be in general use. There is no common religion, they have no literature. Although it was urged on the court that there should be some relevance in the fact that they have what was described as oral literature passing on myths and other old stories I do not think that was what Lord Fraser was referring to.

(Weekly Law Reports, 13 January 1989, p. 26.)

54 This ruling and definition of the Gypsy will be discussed in greater length in a later chapter.
55 See Fraser (1992), pp. 4–5.
56 *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989 , p. 32.
57 See *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, pp. 17–36.
58 One of the expert witnesses, Thomas Acton, has, by way of a riposte, referred to the ignorance, inexperience and prejudices of an unrepresentative and unaccountable judiciary. See T. Acton, 'The social construction and consequences of accusations of false claims to ethnicity and cultural rights', paper presented to the Leiden University Foundation Centennial Conference, 'The Social Construction of Minorities and Their Cultural Rights in Western Europe', held on 12–14 September 1990 at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands, p. 10.
59 See *Independent,* 3 August 1988.
60 Grattan Puxon states that the aim was to campaign for equal civil rights for Gypsies. The convenor of the Congress was Grigoras Nicolescu. Donald Kenrick gives the date of the Congress as 1935. Puxon also mentions a meeting of the All-Russian Romani Union in 1928, led by Nikoli Pankov. William J. Haley refers to the founding of the General Association of Gypsies of Romania in November 1933. Haley also states that a notice appeared in *The Times* (29 September 1879) concerning a conference of East European Gypsies on the theme of 'the common interests of Gypsies everywhere'. See G. Puxon, 'Gypsies spend 50 years trying to unite', photocopy of an uncredited newspaper cutting (I am grateful to Ian Hancock for providing me with a copy of this); Donald Kenrick, 'The World Romani Congress – April *1971', Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* [hereafter, *JGLS],* Vol. 2, Nos. 3–4, 1971, pp. 101–108; William J. Haley, The Gypsy conference at Bucharest', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1934, pp. 182–190.
61 J.-P. Liégeois, *Gypsies and Travellers: Socio-cultural Data, Socio-political Data* (Strasbourg, 1987), p. 170. More tenuously, Liégeois also adds a further factor by mentioning religious movements such as Pentecostalism and charismatic Catholicism, and the way these movements were linked with the sharing of experiences. Although an interesting association, the connection between this and the growth of Gypsy political organisation must surely remain more speculative than the other factors identified.
62 The two main German organisations were the Association of German Sinti (or Verband Deutscher Sinti), founded by Oscar Rose, and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma (or Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma).
63 See G. Puxon, *Rom: Europe's Gypsies* (London, 1973), p. 4.
64 Some sources suggest that both were founded by the Romanian-born Ionel, or Lionel, Rotaru. See G. Puxon, 'Gypsies spend 50 years trying to unite', and Liégeois (1987), p. 164. Kenrick and Bakewell, however, say the founder of CIT was Vanko Rouda. It seems to be generally agreed that the President of the CIT was Vanko Rouda (see D. Kenrick and S. Bakewell, *On the Verge: The Gypsies of England,* London, 1990). The CIT published its own journal, *La Voix mondiale tzigane.* See J.-P. Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History* (London, 1986), p. 150. Elsewhere it is claimed that Ionel Rotariu *[sic]* founded the World Romani

Community in 1959, which had a vision of a separate Romani nation, or Romanestan, in Somalia. See Laszlo Foszto, 'The International Romani Movement in the 90s', MA Thesis, National Studies programme, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, June 2000. I am grateful to Ian Hancock for providing me with a copy of this thesis.

65 'We seek to be the common denominator of Gypsies throughout the world…to bring together all the disparate elements of our people, unnoticed by most but real enough to give them voice and carry it everywhere.' Quoted in Liégeois (1986), p. 150. See also G. Puxon, *On the Road. Report on Gypsies and Civil Liberties* (London, 1968), p. 17; Liégeois (1987), pp. 164–165.

66 Liégeois (1986), p. 152. Liégeois (1987) states that in the post-war period Gypsy organisations were set up 'in almost every country' (p. 166). It is not clear whether this refers only to Europe.

67 Laszlo Foszto, 'The International Romani Movement in the 90s', pp. 9–10; G. Puxon, 'The Romani movement: rebirth and the First World Romani Congress in retrospect', in T. Acton (ed.), *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle: Commitment in Romani Studies* (Hatfield, 2000), pp. 94–113.

68 D. Kenrick, 'The World Romani Congress', gives the location as Kent.

69 Fraser (1992), p. 316. Confusingly, D. Kenrick ('The World Romani Congress') says that it was at the third General Assembly that the decision was taken to adopt the blue and green flag as the flag of the World Romani Movement and that a competition was to be held to find an international Romani anthem.

70 Liégeois (1987), p. 168. Liégeois states that the Congress could be summed up by the notion that the Romani people had the right to choose their own path to progress.

71 Quoted in Liégeois (1986), p. 155.

72 D. Kenrick, 'The World Romani Congress – April 1971', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. 50, Nos. 3–4, 1971, pp. 101–108.

73 Liégeois (1987), p. 168. The figures for the number of representatives and the number of countries represented vary from one commentator to the next.

74 Variously referred to as the International Romani Union, the Romani International Union and the World Romani Union, said to have bureaux in twenty-seven countries. See Hancock (1987), p. 47.

75 See Hancock (1987), p. 47; D. Kenrick, 'Romanies without a road', *Contemporary Politics,* No. 232, March 1978, pp. 153–156; Liégeois (1987), p. 168; Liégeois (1986), chapter 4; Isabel Fonseca *Bury Me Standing. The Gypsies and Their Journey* (New York, 1995), p. 109.

76 See also, 'Current changes amongst British Gypsies and their place in international patterns of development, with a foreword by Ian Hancock', TS, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

77 'Innovation: towards a European Gypsy partnership', *Interface,* No. 17, February 1995, p. 19.

78 See Ian Hancock, 'Statement regarding my position with the International Romani Union', only available on the website www.romnews.com/a/hancock.htm. See also 'Europe's Gypsies: are they a nation?', *Economist,* 25 November 2000, pp. 47–48.

79 *Independent,* 26 July 2000, p. 13; Gary Younge, 'A nation is born', *Guardian,* 31 July 2000, p. 15.

80 See Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), chapter 3; Barbara Adams, Judith Okely, David Morgan and David Smith (eds), *Gypsies and Government Policy in England: A Study of the Travellers' Way of Life in Relation to the Policies and Practices of Central and Local Government* (London, 1975), p. 10.
81 See N. Dodds, *Gypsies, Didikais and Other Travellers* (London, 1966).
82 See Dodds (1966), pp. 39–40 for detail on the Charter; see pp. 140–162 for a verbatim reproduction of his speech to the House of Commons on 1 December 1961.
83 Kenrick, 'Romanies without a road', pp. 153–156.
84 Association of Gypsy Organisations: National Gypsy Education Council, TS information sheet, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. See also Liégeois (1986), chapter 4; Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), chapter 6. Thomas Acton describes the Council as a 'means of asserting their ethnic identity in a time of economic and cultural change'. See Thomas Acton, 'True Gypsies – myth and reality', p. 565. See also Thomas Acton, 'Academic success and political failure: a review of modern social science writing in English on Gypsies', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 2, No. 2, April 1979, p. 233. See also Adams, Okely, Morgan and Smith (eds) (1975), pp. 12–14.
85 Liégeois (1986), p. 152.
86 Letter from Hughie Smith, private correspondence, 1992–1993; see also Puxon (1968), appendices; C.A. Beresford Webb, 'John Cripps and all that: a review of the publications that affect the Gypsies of Britain 1973–1977', *JGLS,* 4th Series, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1977, pp. 191–201. However, it should be noted that some non-Gypsies remained as advisers even though all the officers and members of the Council were Gypsies. See Association of Gypsy Organisations, TS, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
87 Romany Guild: Information Sheet and Proposal, 1973, TS, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
88 See *Romano Drom: Gypsy News,* Vol. 2, 1979; Romany Guild Information Sheet, 1973, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
89 The Association of Gypsy Organisations consisted of the East Anglian Gypsy Council, the Society of Travelling People and the Romani Action Group.
90 Typescript press release, 23 September 1992. It should be noted that the precise origins, history, membership and activities of these organisations are difficult to determine, especially for an outsider, largely owing to the absence of publicly available and verifiable sources.
91 Liégeois (1987), p. 169.
92 See M. Brearley, 'The Roma/Gypsies of Europe: a persecuted people', *Institute for Jewish Policy Research,* Policy Paper No. 3, December 1996.
93 Fraser (1992), p. 9.
94 See T. Acton, 'Authenticity, expertise, scholarship and politics: conflicting goals in Romani studies', Inaugural Professorial lecture, University of Greenwich, 1998, p. 7. I am grateful to Professor Acton for supplying me with a transcript of his talk.
95 See Liégeois (1986), p. 179:

> Under the pressure of Gypsy organisations, a few governments have accorded Gypsies the rights enjoyed by officially designated minorities.

> International organisations, in particular the Council of Europe and the European Community, are now showing considerable interest in the treatment suffered by Gypsies in the various member states and are making fresh recommendations and proposals.

See also Liégeois (1987), p. 117, and Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), p. 66. Some years have now passed since this assessment, and Gypsies are still suffering severe persecution in many states, yet there can be little doubt that the presence of Gypsy organisations and their delegates throughout the formal political structures of nation-states and pan-European associations have ensured that the struggle for emancipation continues.

96 Letter from Hughie Smith, private correspondence, 1992–1993.

97 C.A. Beresford Webb, 'John Cripps and all that'.

98 Fraser (1992), p. 9.

99 T. Acton, 'The social construction and consequences', p. 14.

100 Indeed, the publicity for the volume by T. Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity,* identifies this as an important factor. Unfortunately the theme remains largely unexplored in the volume.

101 Interview with Ken Douglas, Sheffield Gypsy and Traveller Support Group, 1 February 1993; for a family tree of Gypsy organisations, and the various schisms, see T. Acton, 'Seven wasted years: negotiations with the Department of Education and Science 1970–77 on the education of travelling children', duplicated typescript, 1978, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. Acton describes the splits within Gypsy politics as 'complicated', 'raw' and 'difficult to write down'. See T. Acton, 'The life and times of Donald Simon Kenrick', in Thomas Acton (ed.), *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle: Commitment in Romani Studies* (Hatfield, 2000), p. xxvii.

102 See T. Acton, Authenticity, expertise, scholarship', pp. 10–11.

103 *O Drom,* p. 35; see A. Mirga and N. Gheorghe, 'Project on ethnic relations: the Roma in the twenty-first century; a policy paper', May 1997, reviewed by Yaron Matras in *O Drom.* See also Yaron Matras, 'Review of "The Roma in the twenty-first century. A policy paper", by Andrzej Mirga and Nicolae Gheorghe', *JGLS,* Vol. 8, No. 2, August 1998, pp. 151–154.

104 M. Stewart, 'The puzzle of Roma persistence: group identity without a nation', in T. Acton and G. Mundy (eds), *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), p. 90.

105 M. Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, Colorado, 1997), pp. 4–5.

106 N. Gheorghe, 'The social construction of Romani identity', in T. Acton (ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity (Hatfield,* 1997), pp. 153–163.

107 See I. Hancock, S. Dowd and R. Djurič (eds), *The Roads of the Roma: A Pen Anthology of Gypsy* Writers (Hatfield, 1998).

8
Constructing the ethnic Gypsy
Themes and approaches

In 1974 Thomas Acton, writing in *New Society,* stated that the Gypsies, 'or more properly Rom, or Romanichals, are an Indian people who, leaving India in the tenth century, have slowly dispersed, like Jews, all over the world'.[1] In one sentence correct ethnic labels are applied, origins identified, indications given of a diaspora and parallels made with the Jews. In short, ethnicity is established. Although the approaches and style of the many authors forwarding an ethnic definition vary in points of detail, the primary intention is to present the Gypsies as a legitimate ethnic group with the same cultural distinctiveness and, importantly, rights as any other ethnic people. For most Gypsiologists the primary and linked determinants, the solid core, of ethnicity are Indian origin, Romani language and distinctive culture. An image is provided of ethnic unity and of the Gypsies as being a 'unique example of an ethnic whole perfectly defined'.[2] In order to give further weight to this representation it is also claimed that Gypsies now see themselves as an ethnic group, adding the all-important element of self-ascription.[3] One key indicator of this approach is the use of the terms 'Rom', 'Rrom', 'Romany' and 'Roma' which separates Gypsies from non-ethnic Travellers and also from non-Gypsies, usually referred to as *gadzo, gajé, gajo* or *gaujo.* The case for Gypsy ethnicity is built by confirming that Gypsies meet all the criteria for ethnicity identified in the previous chapter.

However, although there is a *de facto* acceptance by most contemporary Gypsiologists that Gypsies do, unquestionably, form an ethnic group, the precise meaning of this ethnicity and the boundaries and criteria for inclusion and exclusion can and do vary considerably, and there are important differences in emphasis with both the Indian origin and cultural components. From the jumble sale of ethnic criteria the different commentators select their favoured items, which, when used to dress the Gypsy, result in a general ethnic picture, but one in which there are significant variations in detail. In fact, in some of the more extreme cases the common elements become lost behind an exaggeration of certain features so that it is possible when reading the work of leading Gypsiologists and proponents of an ethnic definition to believe that they are talking about different groups of people.

To further complicate matters, contrasting or confused definitions of the ethnic Gypsy also appear not just in the works of different authors but also within the

writings of a single author. On occasion, the concepts of race and ethnicity overlap and are used interchangeably, which is understandable, though problematic, as both use essentially the same criteria for establishing identity. In addition to the blurring with racial categorisation, there is also a similar overlap with the concepts of nation and nationality. There can be little dispute with the argument that different national groupings of Gypsies exhibit different features and characteristics, both physical and cultural. However, the difficulty then becomes one of identifying the relative balance of this nationally derived identity against that belonging to the Gypsies, worldwide, as a people separate from the nations of which they form a part. The language of 'ethnicities within ethnicities', 'sub-ethnicities', 'mosaics' and 'kaleidoscope of ethnicities' is an attempt, albeit ultimately an unsatisfactory one, to come to terms with this dilemma. As with the race concept, and its application to Gypsies, the idea that it might be possible to find a commonly agreed definition and usage of ethnicity, and of the ethnic Gypsy, should be quickly abandoned.

The following section will consider the components of Gypsy ethnicity as put forward in the works of a variety of key non-Gypsy commentators, and will illustrate how the idea of a separate ethnic identity is conveyed by such notions as survival, obscurity, diaspora, taboos, exodus and persecution. In short, a separate identity, an ethnic identity, is established by reference to shared origins (the starting place of the exodus and diaspora), cultural separateness (obscurity and taboos) and persecution by (and so distance from) others. The chapter will conclude by returning to some of the key theoretical issues and problems raised in the preceding chapter around notions of ethnicity, many of which concern the primordial, natural or innate dimension of ethnic identity and the problems of homogeneity and global identity.

Components of Gypsy ethnicity

It has already been seen that the notion of the ethnic Gypsy consists of a number of strands, with primary emphasis normally given to origins and diaspora. This in turn gives rise to a range of distinctive cultural features, such as descent, ancestry, kinship and marriage patterns, language, social organisation, taboos, political organisation, employments and economic organisation, nomadism, codes of morality and also, often, a particular state of mind. The final component of the ethnic jigsaw is provided by the history and present experience of persecution. Not all commentators refer to each of these features and the balance of factors changes from one writer to the next. It is the purpose of the next section to review the arguments that are presented under each of these headings and to draw out their significance for the ethnic construct.

Origins, migrancy and diaspora

Origins are seen by many as the central foundation stone, essence and heart of Gypsy identity. To assert common Indian origins is to provide the Gypsies with a shared homeland. The subsequent migrancy and relations with a variety of 'host' societies then also contribute to a shared past and history. It is further argued that such cultural features as language and customs have their roots in that original homeland. This link between remote origins and current cultural practices and beliefs is a major component of many of the ethnic definitions of the Gypsy, and to prove Indian origins is therefore to prove ethnicity. This is conveniently expressed in a shorthand manner by Kenrick and Bakewell when they talk of North West India as forming 'the cradle of the Romani nation'.[4] Such statements as this, presented as objective fact and not inviting criticism or challenge, are commonplace.[5] Marek Kohn, in his influential book *The Race Gallery,* stated that 'as biologists, linguists and historians all agree, the Roma… originated in India', again suggesting the absence of debate or discussion on this issue.[6] Gypsiologists, perhaps as a result of a general unawareness within the Gypsy group itself of the precise nature of their origins, have been almost obsessively preoccupied with trying to prove the facts of common descent from an original migratory group. The manner in which a distinctive geographical origin and identity provide the explanation for a range of other characteristics such as language, culture and beliefs shows a marked similarity with the system of racial classification.

Although speculation and theories about origins still often begin any discussion of the Gypsy group, this frequently then gives way to a consideration of their dispersal and migrations through Persia, the Byzantine Empire, the Balkans and into Europe.[7] Indeed, the notion of Gypsies as a diaspora people has become an essential component of the ethnicity argument, a development that parallels the more general interest in the subject that has emerged as a result of the weakening of ties to nation-states and increased worldwide population movements in the post-1945 period.[8] The relationship between diaspora and collective identity is complex and can take various forms.

It might be expected that diaspora and dispersal would serve to dilute and break up any sense of a collective identity by the fact of removal from the unifying features of the homeland and by spreading a population around the world. However, this threat to collective identity was often compensated for by the migrant group concentrating in specific geographical locations in the host societies, and in these circumstances collective action in defence or pursuit of common interests was able to develop and cultural practices became consolidated and reaffirmed. Importantly, migrants tend to relocate among their own kind, and by congregating in a geographically limited area and by remaining there for some time it was possible for the political and social expressions of their shared identity, such as places of worship and leisure activities, to emerge. For example, Jews, historically a diaspora people, have traditionally settled in

quite specific locations within nations, developing identifiable Jewish quarters. Also, migrant peoples with some recent connection with their homeland take with them at least certain symbols and practices, such as diet, dress or support for a sporting national team, in order to retain their identity in a different environment and context. In both these cases the status of the homeland takes on a high degree of importance, in the sense that it is the political objective of an ethnic people either to create a state founded on the geographical integrity of their homeland, or else, if migrants, at some time to return to the place of their ancestors or otherwise to keep the memory alive in various forms.

The situation with Gypsies, and the status of their homeland, is rather different. The place of origin of their ancestors is located so far in the distant past as to be little more than, at best, a remote memory. Also, migration and dispersal were not usually balanced by significant geographical bunching in the host territories. Gypsies have become dispersed not only the world over but also within Britain, if not in all nations, into relatively small family units and encampments, and this has delayed or prevented the building of the normal ideological and institutional mechanisms for asserting common identity.

However, even if the actual experience of the Gypsy diaspora might have had a negative effect on group identity, it can be argued that this has been compensated for by the story, or perhaps the myth, of diaspora providing a sense of a shared history and a past in which constant movement and persecution have served to strengthen a sense of otherness. The language of migrancy, exodus and diaspora, replete with the biblical connotations of a persecuted minority, echoes the history and experience of the Jews, a parallel that is made all the more forceful when persecution and, later, the Holocaust, are introduced into the equation. The notion of dispersal and migration carries with it the idea of an original homeland from where the first ancestors departed and so provides a basis for a sense of national identity. For some, it even becomes a land, like Israel for the Jews, to which the Gypsies will one day return, the final political goal and peak of spiritual fulfilment.[9] The notion of diaspora suggests that at least for the duration of the movement the migrant people remained largely separate from the indigenous populations of the countries through which they travelled, and so were subjected to the persecutory treatment often reserved for nomads, newcomers, strangers and outsiders. Both the experience of persecution and the memory of it, passed on through generations, contribute to the creation of boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. The question that must be asked, though, is whether this sense of the past belongs to the people themselves and is part of their tradition and collective memory, or whether it is something that has been largely constructed in the writings of outsiders.

In recent years there has been a drift towards a general belief that migration westwards from India occurred in several stages, probably beginning in the ninth century However, it is premature to talk in terms of a consensus among Gypsiologists and, once again, there is little unanimity concerning the precise original location, the timing of and reasons for the migration or migrations, and

whether ancestry and exodus can be traced back to one original group or many. If the latter, then the formation of a single body occurred outside India and followed rather than preceded migration.[10] While many texts make reference to the Gypsies' Indian or North Indian origins, the details are often left imprecise, and this is despite a shared and concerted attempt to relegate earlier theories about origins and migrancy to the ranks of legends and myths and to replace these with alternative theories based primarily on more sophisticated linguistic and genetic analysis.[11] As will be seen, there is the danger that old myths are simply being replaced by new ones.

Nicolae Gheorghe and Thomas Acton identify two periods of migration, the first from North India around the seventh century, creating the Nawari Zott communities of the Middle East, and the second, also from North India, around the tenth century, creating the Romani communities of Turkey and Europe.[12] Donald Kenrick locates migration from India to Persia more broadly in the period from AD 224 to AD 642, although, elsewhere, he talks of Gypsies being descendants of 'people who emigrated from India between the fourth and tenth centuries'.[13] Elsewhere Gypsiologists refer to both separate and single migrations, and to descent from several tribes or castes, and the date of migration is variously given as from AD 800 to AD 950 and as between AD 500 and AD 1000.[14]

The uncertainty over the impetus for and timing of migration can also be seen in the doubts that exist over the nature of the original group. Gypsies have been said to derive from a loose confederation of nomadic tribes living and travelling in India and Iran.[15] Alternatively, and in contrast to the view which holds that the Gypsies of Europe belonged to an ancestral chain that could be traced back to a single Indian group which migrated westwards, Kenrick suggests that they derived from Indian immigrants from various tribes who intermarried and intermixed in Persia, forming a group known as the Dom or Rom. Elsewhere, Kenrick traces the origins of European Gypsies to a group known as Zott, a mixture of Persian land-workers, soldiers, and their families and persons of Indian origin called Dom, who included among them nomadic craft-workers and entertainers.[16] The evidence for this is at best circumstantial,[17] and yet Kenrick has moved from traditional views on single origins, and even from an earlier position of his own, to suggest the multiple origins from India, with the Gypsies only being formed as a group, with presumably a distinctive identity, after they had intermarried and intermixed with other groups in the countries through which they travelled.

A further, though in some ways similar, alternative is provided in the recent work of Ian Hancock, a noted Gypsy and professor of linguistics, who sees the original group as consisting of a military band of non-Aryan Indians and possibly African mercenaries (called Siddhis), drawn from different ethnic groups and speaking different languages, who had been brought together in the first two or three decades of the eleventh century to halt the assault of the Islamic troops under the Muslim general Mohammed of Ghazni, who was trying to push Islam

east into mainly Hindu India.[18] This mixed military band then moved further west, through the Byzantine Empire in the thirteenth century and eventually into Europe, continuing their fight against Islam and picking up other peoples, and their languages and dialects, on their migrations/travels. They eventually formed their own distinctive group, known as Rajputs, established a separate identity and developed their own language (called Romany), presumably a hybrid of all the collected languages and dialects. Hancock describes them as 'a continuum of distinct ethnic groups constituting a larger whole'.[19] The evidence offered by Hancock to support his theory that this group were the original ancestors of modern-day Gypsies is provided by the retention of Rajput clan insignia among some Vlax populations in Europe and other 'linguistic and historical' evidence, the precise nature of which is not clarified.[20]

Even this brief review of some of the theories of the dating of migrancy and concerning the original group indicates the dependence on broad generalisations and the absence of consensus. The initial ambition of producing a new factual account of origins and migrations to replace the previous legends soon gives way to 'almost certainties', 'probabilities', 'possibilities' and 'likelihoods'. If the drift towards any kind of agreement can be discerned, it is towards the idea of multiple migrations and diverse origins rather than a single time-specific migration of a particular group. The process of forming a Gypsy people occurred *after* the original migrations and as part of the experience of the diaspora itself, with various groups coming together as one people as a result of the attitudes and responses of outsiders and host societies 'erecting a boundary against them all'.[21] However, even this revised and more flexible approach remains speculative, largely as the sources for the early history of the Gypsies remain partial and contradictory.[22]

Each of the theories concerning origins and migrations relies primarily on linguistic evidence, still seen by many as the most reliable way of establishing origins and indicating patterns of migrancy. Following similar lines of enquiry to the nineteenth-century philologists, the albeit imprecise Indian origins have been established primarily by means of an alleged correspondence of either sound, grammar or words, or any combination of these, between the Romani and Indian languages. Ian Hancock has noted that the Romani language has the same 'morphological, syntactic, phonological and lexical features as several of the Indic languages. The closest is Western Hindi, which itself emerged from Rajputic.'[23] It is often stated that the Romani language is derived from Sanskrit and has many links with other Northern Indian languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujerati, Bengali and Sylheti.[24] In order to affirm the Indian connection and the notion of an unchanging core, Ian Hancock has claimed that '[t]oday, the Romani language, like the Romani people and Romani culture, remains at heart Indian, despite being modified through contact with others over the years'.[25] As well as the Romani language being used to establish Indian origins, it also becomes a major component of current Romani ethnic identity and is often presented as 'the kernel' or 'cornerstone' of Gypsy identity. The argument is simple and

follows the same path as the nineteenth-century philologists and Gypsy lorists: the roots of the language reveal the roots of the people who speak the language. In this instance, though, the crude assumptions about how language is acquired and the link between the ability to speak the language and purity are abandoned, and an ethnic rather than racial identity is the outcome.

Increasingly, there is the admission among some Gypsiologists that the comparative linguistic and physical anthropological approach is flawed and that any conclusions which are drawn must necessarily be extremely tentative. The speculative nature of the linguistic evidence is revealed most sharply by the continued disagreements among Indianists and the constantly changing views about Gypsy origins. Angus Fraser, in a text which otherwise seems to reaffirm the Indian origins of the group, offers a word of caution:

> the study of Romani can reveal a great deal about the origin and evolution of the language itself. How far that can be equated with the origin and evolution of Romani-speakers is a more speculative matter, and the equivalence cannot be taken for granted.[26]

As Fraser states, the case for saying that Romani is a language of Indian origin remains unproven.[27] This matter has occupied the attention of many philologists, linguists and Gypsiologists for a period spanning over two centuries and it now seems unlikely that any new text sources, or indeed linguistic methodologies, will emerge to prove the case conclusively one way or the other. Donald Kenrick, one of the foremost proponents of the Indian theory, concedes that the attempt to construct the early history of the Gypsies is like trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle when pieces are missing and parts of another puzzle have been put in the same box.[28] While this is a useful analogy it perhaps fails to recognise the extent to which many pieces are lost for ever and the manner in which other pieces have intruded, resulting in a picture that has been forced together largely on the basis of guesswork and assumption and, perhaps, also on the basis of a pre-formed image of the desired end result.

The linguistic test of origins appears, then, to have reached the end of a long and bumpy road filled with many potholes, only to find a dead-end awaiting, and Gypsiologists are now following an alternative route which employs research into genomes, blood groups and population genetics. It is hoped in some quarters that this relatively new science might conclusively and finally answer the question whether or not the Gypsies were of Indian origin. Genetic anthropology, or molecular anthropology, uses blood samples and an analysis of DNA to identify distinct genetic profiles which can then be used to trace origins on the basis of comparison with other groups in other places and times.[29] To date, genetic research in relation to the Gypsies has investigated the possibility of links with existing populations in India and with non-Gypsy populations among whom they have travelled and lived. Also, the extent of genetic difference among

the Gypsy groups themselves has also come under the DNA microscope.[30] Ian Hancock has used the results from various researches to claim the following:

> Every single group identifying itself as Roma and from whom blood samples have been taken (by a team led by Dr Peter Underhill of the Centre for Human Genetics in Perth), demonstrates the existence of an Indian polymorphism on the male Y chromosome. This kind of testing has also been undertaken by researchers from Slovakia and India, with the same conclusions.[31]

Hancock's confidence in the ability of the results to prove Indian origins is not, though, widely shared. At the time of writing, the evidence drawn from various studies, some dating back to the 1920s but mostly concentrated in the post-1945 period, still remains inconclusive. Some studies have identified similarities in the blood group systems of Gypsies and North Indian populations, while other, later studies have pointed to contrary conclusions by identifying 'considerable genetic variation' and heterogeneity among Gypsy groups in Europe, finding that Gypsies only resemble populations in the Indian subcontinent in some limited respects.[32] The currently available data, necessarily based only on relatively small samples, have been described as insufficient and at present conclusions are varied and speculative.[33]

If the evidence for origin, whether linguistic or genetic, remains speculative and inconclusive, then the facts about the timing and direction of the diaspora are also, at best, contentious. The 'evidence' is based largely on linguistic analysis in order to identify the direction and length of stay, and the extent of assimilation in particular countries and areas is determined by discovering similarities and patterns in word and grammatical usage. While such an approach is clearly of some value, there are also other factors to be considered when assessing this kind of evidence, notably the nature of the relationship between the group and the society of which they (temporarily) formed a part. In addition, commentators such as Kenrick also base their arguments on material found in early Persian texts, though on his own admission the evidence remains more circumstantial than factual, more partial than total. Any attempt at uncovering the earliest history of the Gypsies necessarily involves making assumptions, connections and associations which, however probable, are and will remain unproveable. This is only a problem if the resultant speculation about origins and migrancy is taken as factual truth by others.

As a result of the unreliability of sources and so the continued doubts that remain about the Gypsies' early history, some writers who otherwise remain within the ethnic paradigm have moved, with varying degrees of urgency and speed, away from an emphasis on Indian origins. In his inaugural professorial lecture Thomas Acton referred to the Roma as 'descendants *in part at least* [my emphasis] of Indian emigrants'.[34] The qualification is significant as it concedes that Gypsies have origins and ancestral links to places and people other than

India and Indians. It is not clear, though, whether this is to follow the Kenrick theory outlined above, or whether it takes into account the many generations of intermixing and intermarriage since the original migration. At the very least it allows for degrees of assimilation and is thus moving some steps away from the long-held notion of separateness. Indian roots are then, to some degree, being reduced in importance and are seen as of less significance in understanding the nature and identity of the present-day Gypsy community. Similarly, Angus Fraser, in his major study *The Gypsies,* seems also to question the value of continuing the long-running debate about origins. He writes:

> After the lapse of so much time it may be a forlorn hope to seek to prove with any certainty the precise people (or combination of peoples) from which the European Gypsies sprang in the past or which is most closely related to them today.[35]

However, while these writers question and qualify though do not entirely reject the theory of Indian origins, Judith Okely argues for its abandonment. Okely, a professor of anthropology, has come forward with a more radical position which has resulted in a degree of misunderstanding and misinterpretation, spiced with not a little animosity and accusations of 'glibness' and 'arrogance'.[36] Her approach to the question of origins has led to strong condemnation and criticism from the Indian theorists, who argued that by denying Indian roots the fundamental basis of Gypsy identity and ethnicity had been removed. One of her foremost critics over a number of years has been the eminent Gypsiologist, now professor of Romani studies, Thomas Acton. In particular, Acton is concerned with what he terms Okely's 'de-ethnicising' position, which he believes has opened the way to further discrimination against the group as the legal and political defence against racism, that of being a legitimate ethnic group, had been removed.[37]

Despite her work being interpreted by lawyers and others to justify 'deethnicising' the Gypsy, Okely herself makes it clear that she defends the notion of them as a legitimate ethnic group even though her version of ethnicity has moved away from the alleged Indian roots of the group and towards an alternative analysis which stresses the indigenous origins and development of the English Gypsies.[38] Okely's own response to the criticisms of her work has been to suggest that there has been misuse and falsification of her writing by lawyers, politicians and other academics.[39]

Okely's ethnic definition emphasises common attributes, culture and tradition, but she does not base these on any notion of shared foreign origins from which all else derived. Her argument is grounded in self-ascription and her own 'historical' research, from which she concludes that the Gypsies of Britain were of both foreign and indigenous origins. The group which emerged over time could lay claim, she argues, to culture and traditions which represented an amalgam of influences both foreign and native. So, rather than concentrating on

origins, Okely selected another of the old lorist concerns, that of rites, ceremonies and beliefs, as the basis of Gypsy identity. Regulations concerning pollution and cleanliness were thus transferred into a contemporary setting. Okely refutes the single-origin theory, thus challenging the sacred cow of both the racial and ethnic definitions, not in order to deny ethnicity to the Gypsies, but rather so as to confirm it by other means. The obsession with Indian origins is seen as belonging to non-Gypsies rather than Gypsies, whose own identification, argues Okely, is with their current country of residence rather than a remote alleged place of origin.[40]

Having broadly challenged the notion of Indian origins, Okely then applies this to a specific case study by means of an examination of the nature and identity of English Gypsies. She questions whether the group of 'Egyptians' present in sixteenth-century England were of foreign origin and suggests instead that the label 'was nothing but an assumed identity for many persons with no foreign origin'.[41] In abandoning theories of Indian origins, and its explanation of Gypsy language and culture, Okely looks elsewhere for the basis of Gypsy ethnicity.

Although admitting that her sources are 'sketchy', she proposes that English Gypsies emerged in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries from indigenous roots, formed from the coming together of persons who, at the time of the collapse of feudalism and fundamental social and economic change, rejected wage labour and adopted itinerant trades and services.[42] In effect, Okely locates the emergence of a self-forming and self-identifying Gypsy group as the outcome of specific material circumstances and the rational choice of formerly sedentary natives to become mobile economic and family units:

> ultimately an ethnic group emerged which exploited geographical mobility, self-employment, and exotic or other occupations. Specific beliefs, practices and linguistic codes were adopted and elaborated to affirm an ethnic boundary.[43]

To an extent Okely's proposition, based on a clause in the 1562 legislation concerning 'counterfeit Egyptians' and other evidence that indigenous 'wayfarers…rovers…and landless peasants' disguised themselves as Gypsies by, for example, darkening their skins, is a reasonable one.[44] Although convincing evidence is lacking, it does seem likely that groups of indigenous travellers and nomads imitated the Egyptians, probably for reasons of financial gain, and possibly even intermixed and intermarried with them, as has been discussed in Chapter 3. Indeed, some qualified support for her analysis can be found in the work of Angus Fraser, who writes of

> the considerable non-Romany element in the ancestry of the British Gypsy population and the long history of other travelling groups which were in existence well before the Gypsies came and which overlapped with them in

> many aspects of their social life and means of livelihood. The literally insular nature of British society as a whole has led to a blurring of ethnic distinctions within the Traveller population.[45]

Similarly, Thomas Acton, a major critic of Okely's work when it was published, also writes of the creation of a new group of Gypsies in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries formed out of the 'fusion' of original immigrants/ descendants and indigenous nomads.[46] There appears, then, to be little disagreement that intermixing certainly took place between Gypsies and indigenous peoples, though the extent of this must remain as pure speculation. The notion that 'many persons' adopted the Egyptian title has to remain a strong possibility; however, to then extend the argument to claim that 'many *if not all* [my emphasis] of the first recorded Egyptians in the British Isles' were not of foreign origin and that 'groups of so-called Egyptians were composed largely *if not entirely* [my emphasis] of disenfranchised and indigenous persons who adopted and exploited an exotic nomenclature' is a step too far.[47] Such a view remains unsupported by evidence and too casually dismisses the possibility that the label was probably *not* an assumed title for equally as many persons who were of foreign origin.

As ever, when discussing the early history of Gypsies the sources can be misleading and ambiguous, and while Okely suggests that the evidence for foreign/ Indian origins is based on either speculation or distortion, it should also be noted that her own argument, in favour of indigenous origins, is equally open to the same charges. This, though, is to perpetuate the debates around origins. Over fifteen years ago Jean-Pierre Liégeois was arguing that '[i]t is now often arbitrary – and sociologically, politically, anthropologically and culturally irrelevant – to separate groups of Indian from those of indigenous origin (and sometimes even impossible to do so)'.[48] The arbitrariness and impossibility of the task are beyond question, and yet it continues to occupy a prominent place in any writing or discussion about the group.

Descent/ancestry /kinship

Ideas of descent, ancestry and kinship feature in most accounts of the ethnic Gypsy and in some instances are even placed above origins as the key component of identity. The importance of establishing ancestry/kinship is that it excludes from the group those who might adopt a superficially similar style of life but otherwise lack the history and traditions. Most obviously, in the present climate, this would exclude New Age Travellers from the Gypsy category. Again, the emphasis on descent and ancestry provides a past and an identity shaped around family and kinship networks. A Gypsy identity, and so Gypsy ethnicity, is therefore something an individual is born with rather than something that can be acquired, or even abandoned, later. Importantly, the main criterion adopted by Gypsies themselves is said to be that at least one parent must be Gypsy.[49]

However, it is not thought that descent and ancestry are sufficient on their own, and identity has to be validated, reinforced and reproduced through the experience of the community and its way of life, culture and values.

Culture

A key aspect of any ethnic classification is the notion that a group can be defined according to a shared culture. For most commentators this results in a search to identify the nature and origins of that common culture, which together contribute to the distinctive identity of the group. This has resulted in an analytical spectrum that, at one end, presents the ethnic group as possessing a core culture which is shared by all the group, everywhere. In relation to Gypsies, this remains as the most common approach. However, more recently, the scale has been widened, often still retaining the concept of core culture, but now also recognising the variety of cultures among the Gypsies, some borrowed and interpreted from the 'host' society. Moreover, it has also been suggested that the core culture is more an abstract or idealised form and 'would not belong in its entirety to any actual Gypsy population'.[50] The central components of the core culture are variously said to include self-employment, knowledge of the group's language, an ideology of travelling, distinctive habitat, dress, rituals and codes of behaviour (especially in relation to cleanliness), forms of economic, social and political organisation, and a general ideological separation from non-Gypsies.[51] Laws and customs relating to pregnancy, childbirth, baptism, puberty, virginity, clothes, food, cooking, hygiene, marriage, death and funerals together comprise the core system of allegedly distinctive Gypsy beliefs and practices.

There are two main ways in which Gypsy culture is presented. First, culture is linked, in a linear fashion, with the Gypsies' alleged Indian origins. In an argument that resembles the racial explanation of physical difference, cultural features are shown to have their roots in India, and, often, the connecting line is presented as static and unbroken.[52] Second, a modified version of this accepts that traditions, culture, beliefs are distinctive, and that although they were possibly rooted in an Indian past they have subsequently evolved and been transformed over a period of time by incorporating features from non-Gypsy society.[53]

In a twist that reverses a popularly held image of the dirty and unclean Gypsy, a major recurrent theme in writing on the beliefs and practices of Gypsies is the notion of cleanliness rituals and ideas concerning pollution. These codes are applied to such everyday practices and events as food preparation, personal cleanliness, clothing, relations between the sexes, menstruating women, childbirth, the body below the waist, and anything to do with bodily wastes.[54] These are variously referred to by the terms *moxadi, mokadi, mochadi, marimé, mahrime* and *marimo*.[55] The attempt to discover and codify these practices has occupied the attention of outside observers from at least the early nineteenth century to the present day. Indeed, the behaviour and beliefs concerning

pollution are often presented as static and unchanging over generations, and there is often little to distinguish the nineteenth- from the twentieth-century accounts. In particular, and perhaps unsurprisingly, this area of investigation has been particularly favoured by anthropologists, and Michael Stewart has remarked that in anthropological literature cleanliness beliefs 'are perhaps the single most commented on feature of Gypsy "culture"'.[56]

The existence of such codes shaping behaviour contributes to the ethnic classification of Gypsies in various ways. First, they are said to have originated in the practices and beliefs held by their ancestors. This not only presents the culture of the group in a positive and favourable light, but the continuation of past practices and beliefs lends *gravitas* to group behaviour. Moreover, while certain of these practices and taboos around cleanliness are certainly followed by other groups, such as the Zoroastrians and Jews, other parallels are rare and specific. Importantly, they are not shared by the majority societies in which the Gypsies have found themselves and so form one of the barriers that separate Gypsies from non-Gypsies. Judith Okely, for example, sees these beliefs and practices as the key to Gypsy distinctiveness and separateness and she writes that 'the tea towel hanging separately to dry on a line becomes a flag of ethnic purity'.[57] Fonseca takes this even further when she refers to the codification of 'hundreds of unwritten laws and superstitions enforcing symbolic purification', and to the 'tangled underbrush of prohibitions' which forms the hedge between Gypsies and non-Gypsies.[58] They provide a sense of shared identity as all Gypsies are said to 'strictly and unquestioningly' honour the codes and taboos. They become the 'universal language' of the Gypsy and constitute the basis of 'Romipen', or Gypsyhood.[59] English Gypsies were thought to risk pollution if they even mentioned the name of animals, such as snakes and rats, which were considered dirty or polluted. Pollution of any kind was therefore to be avoided, even to the extent that relations with non-Gypsies were kept to the absolute minimum required for economic survival in order to avoid any risk of contamination. Furthermore, the significance for the establishment of an ethnic identity was enhanced by the additional comparisons that could be drawn between Gypsy codes on pollution and purity and the codes governing Jewish behaviour, for example in relation to food and diet, to be found in the Talmud.

The key notion, then, is that these codes, beliefs and practices, influential in many aspects of daily life, define and maintain the boundaries between Gypsies and non-Gypsies.[60] Again, the key issue is not whether Gypsies do or do not follow these practices,[61] nor whether they are rooted in some remote Indian past, nor whether they provide the main boundary between insiders and outsiders. The important point is that the concept of pollution has been used in all these ways to identify the group as a distinct ethnic group.[62]

The racial definition of the Gypsy placed great importance on nomadism as an essential characteristic of the Gypsy, linking it with a range of other hereditary characteristics. The problem for the racial theorists, as it is for those presenting the ethnic classification, is that there is no simple and straightforward match

between Gypsies and nomadism: it is often stated, quite accurately, that not all Gypsies are nomads and not all nomads are Gypsies. Indeed, it is even argued that the link between Gypsies and nomadism has been the invention of *gadjo* romanticism. However, *purposeful* nomadism continues to have importance for the ethnic classification for a combination of reasons. First, a nomadic way of life is seen as traditional, and so to settle can be seen as a movement away from and break with past (distinctive) practices. Also, second, settlement can mean that the group is becoming acculturated to the ways of settled society, thereby losing its distinctiveness and adopting the ways of the dominant host. The settlement of Gypsies has long been an ambition of various members and sectors of settled society, not only because it undermined the negative aspects of travelling but also because it would permit assimilation and absorption into the wider value system of the receiving society. There is sufficient evidence, for English as well as foreign Gypsies, that settlement, whether temporary or permanent, has for a long time been a feature of the Gypsy population. Perhaps for this reason, recent commentators on the English and European Gypsy populations place much less emphasis on the need for group nomadism.[63] But in order to ensure that evidence for settlement is not taken to mean that Gypsies are losing their distinctiveness, an argument has now emerged that identifies nomadism not as an actual situation or way of living but as a state of mind. This means that it is possible to travel and yet remain sedentary, just as it is possible to live a sedentary existence but remain a nomad. It is worth quoting the presentation of this argument in some detail:

> Whereas a sedentary person remains sedentary even when travelling, the Traveller or Gypsy is a nomad even if he does not travel. Immobilised, he remains a Traveller. It is therefore preferable to speak of Gypsies and Travellers who have become sedentary rather than of sedentary Gypsies and Travellers, since the sedentary condition is for them *a priori* a provisional state – more clearly illustrated by the former phrase – for people for whom movement is of vital significance. Nomadism is more a state of mind than an actual situation. Its existence and importance are frequently more psychological than geographical. The Traveller who loses the hope of setting off again and the possibility of doing so, also loses his identity as a traveller.[64]

This argument is repeated in the work of Kenrick and Bakewell, who also assert that nomadism is ‘a state of mind rather than a state of action’.[65] This is an important development, as identity is now being located less in actual experience or in visible and measurable differences than in psychological differences with non-Gypsies. An echo of the old racial arguments is evident in this approach. Liégeois continues his line of argument: ‘If you are a Gypsy or Traveller, it is something you know, feel and live. It is a lifestyle based on ways of being that are undefinable *[sic]* and intangible, and on ways of doing which may be

variable or ephemeral.'[66] By a quick sleight of hand the fact of nomadism has been reduced almost to insignificance, and sedentary Gypsies remain as much Gypsies as their nomadic brothers and sisters by mentally retaining the values and spirit of nomadism. Difference is now seen less as matter of origins, history or culture and more as a 'sense', a 'feeling', a 'state of mind'. The problem for the outsider is that values and spirit, which are largely invisible, indefinable, intangible and ephemeral, are now being identified as components of the boundary between the Gypsy and non-Gypsy. Emphasis is being given to abstract qualities which define ethnicity. Whatever the attractions or merits of such an argument, the problem remains that such criteria remain outside the bounds of objective measurement.

It was seen in an earlier chapter that the nineteenth-century lorists and philologists made elaborate claims about the value of speaking Romany as a test of identity. While the simplistic expression of this argument is no longer acceptable, it nevertheless remains true that many commentators still use language as a key indicator. Indeed, Marcel Courthiade, writing in *Interface,* states that language 'is the most stable cultural reference point'.[67] The argument is that other cultural traits are either variable, changing or ephemeral and that language remains as the single most consistent and objectively measurable characteristic. As the acquisition of language through birth into a particular linguistic community is undoubtedly a key indicator of origins and identity, there can be little dispute with the proposition that this applies equally to the Gypsy community. However, the tendency to represent Romani as a single language understood by all Gypsies has now given way to a growing acceptance that, although it might have a single origin, it now consists of more than 100 dialects or even separate languages, often mutually unintelligible despite the existence of some core words.[68]

The social organisation of the Gypsy group, and the codes and rituals which reinforce this, consolidate the ethnic picture. Many commentators refer to the extended family and kinship networks as the core structure of the Roma. While intermarriage takes place, as previously recognised, various explanations and justifications are offered for this. It is argued that a new type of hybrid group emerges, that the Gypsy aspect is dominant, that it is a means of strengthening the group and of hiding from the authorities, and is also a way of disguising ethnicity. More usually the fact of intermarriage becomes lost in the details of the mechanisms employed to exclude outsiders and to ensure that marriage takes place within the community: 'the selection of a spouse from outside disrupts the pattern of social and economic bonding that maintains stability within the community'.[69]

In order to strengthen the boundaries and set up criteria for inclusion/exclusion a distinction is frequently made between the true ethnic Gypsy, alternatively labelled Rom, Rrom or Romany, and those groups that have been formed by intermarriage between the Rom and the host populations. This includes the Travellers in Scotland, the Yenische in Germany, Tatari in Scandinavia and

didicois in England. As the origins and possibly even the culture and beliefs of these groups are seen as different from those of the ethnic Gypsy they are identified and treated as groups apart. Further distinctions are often then also made between ethnic Gypsies and other nomadic groups with whom there has been no or minimal intermixing and intermarriage, such as the Irish tinkers and New Age Travellers, who share certain features and a way of life in common but who have their own separate origins, culture and even language.

The distinctive social organisation of the Gypsies is mirrored in the ethnic definition by their own forms of political organisation. The idea that Gypsies have their kings and queens and a system of formal leadership no longer seems to be accepted by most contemporary commentators and there is no unanimity on the nature of the Gypsies' polity. Various versions are put forward, including the idea of Gypsy councils or tribunals, or *kris,* and references can also be found to Gypsy law and the Council of Elders. An alternative, to be found in the work of Jean-Pierre Liégeois, is of a more informal arrangement based around kinship ties and what he refers to as 'the judicial regulation of tensions and conflicts between different groups'[70] – in short, a loose, unstructured form of political, social and judicial organisation, but one which does to some extent overcome the diversity of the population by the existence of a shared and autonomous system of justice.

State of mind and the Gypsy spirit

As has been seen, some of the works that argue in favour of the ethnic Gypsy also make reference to the idea that Gypsy separateness and ethnicity can be defined by a distinctive Gypsy spirit, character, state of mind or distinctive Romani worldview. Fonseca, for example, uses the nature of the Romani language as the linguistic expression of a much broader Gypsy personality. In a variation of the traditional argument, more important than the actual words is the 'spirit' of the language, which is seen as 'hyperbolic, gregarious, typically expressive of extreme emotion'.[71] For Fonseca, then, the spirit of the language and the character of the people are the same: not peaceful, quiet, thoughtful and rational, which by implication are the characteristics reserved for others, but rather loud, outgoing, emotional and passionate. She adds to this picture of distinctive behavioural characteristics, which, it is implied, are common to the whole group, of loving noise, having no need of privacy, and of using disguise, misrepresentation and secrecy as a means of survival.[72]

Fonseca is not alone in emphasising attitudes and character as defining features of the Gypsies, and this has been seen previously in relation to nomadism. Similarly, Michael Stewart identifies the distinctive Gypsy characteristics as being those of style, panache and charm, a cultivated insouciance and a careful disregard and attentive disdain for the non-Gypsy way. He refers to their sense of egalitarianism and individualism, the Gypsy way of doing things *(Romanes),* the ethos of sharing and the idiom of brotherhood.[73]

Their core identity is therefore an attitude and a distinctive 'Rom sense of what it is to be human', which is revealed in the way they 'invert or subvert' the meanings of 'objects, representations and practices' found in the non-Gypsy world.[74] Elsewhere, Clébert talks of the Gypsy love of freedom, their flight from the bonds of civilisation, their need to live in accordance with nature's rhythm and their desire to be their own masters.[75] This attempt to ascribe particular mental or spiritual qualities to the Gypsies has clear echoes of the old racial classification which viewed them as innate, inherited qualities transmitted by blood.

It is evident that Gypsies are not the only nomadic people in the world and that not all Gypsies are nomadic; equally, certain beliefs, such as purity rituals, are not exclusive to Gypsies any more than they are practised by all Gypsies. However, the distinctiveness is in the combination of features, and in this the twentieth-century Gypsiologists arguing in favour of the ethnic classification have to a considerable degree been using the same arguments, language and evidence as the nineteenth-century Gypsy lorists. Both have set out to identify the 'essence' of the Gypsy and both systems of classification place a similar emphasis on the importance of separateness and difference. However, some components, such as the lorists' obsession with biological and physical difference, have been largely abandoned and new components added. Of these, perhaps the most important has been persecution.

Persecution

Alongside themes of origins and diaspora a further major component of the majority, if not all, ethnic definitions of the group has been that of discrimination and persecution. It is commonly and regularly asserted by scholars, by Gypsiologists and by Gypsy pressure groups themselves that both the history and present position of Gypsies are dominated by various forms of unremitting persecution and harassment, including executions, brandings, mutilations, whippings and rape.[76] This history of the group was first brought within the arena of international politics in 1968, when a Swedish resolution ensured that the hostile treatment of Gypsies was passed for investigation to the Council of Europe's Social and Health Committee, and it has remained a key policy area since that date. This story of the Gypsy past and present has now extended beyond a specialised audience and increasingly is being brought to public attention by newspaper articles, notably in the *Independent* and the *Guardian,* reporting the continued hostility shown to the group. Not only does such journalism represent an aspect of the media representation of the group which challenges or at least qualifies the notion that the printed media is at the forefront of hostile stereotyping, but it also plays a major role in challenging popular perceptions and establishing the group as a people whose rights have traditionally been threatened or denied.

Not surprisingly, and also not without significance for the construction of the ethnic classification, much emphasis has been given to the treatment of Gypsies under Nazism. The Gypsy Holocaust, once described as 'forgotten', is now being remembered much more widely, and in written histories as well as museum exhibitions the experience of Gypsies is considered alongside that of the Jews and other persecuted groups. But the Holocaust is also placed in the much wider context of hostile treatment by a wide range of 'host' societies which both preceded and have followed the genocide attempted by the Nazis.[77] Indeed the concept of genocide has even been given an extended currency and is used by Thomas Acton to refer to the 'surge' of persecution which occurred throughout Europe between 1520 and 1600.[78] The intention here is evidently to establish some kind of continuity in the extreme forms of treatment of the group and to make a parallel between historical and more contemporary responses. Whether the various strategies of diverse early modern states, such as enslavement, forced labour, exclusion, banishment, imprisonment and dispersal, compare with the specifically targeted and racially motivated policies of Nazi Germany is, of course, a point of debate. For our purposes, though, of more importance is the way in which this presentation of the past and the analysis of the relations between Gypsies and non-Gypsies contributes to the development of the ethnic classification.

Persecution, whether experienced or learnt as part of group history, helps to establish Gypsy ethnicity by consolidating a sense of group identity and by establishing ethnic credentials in the eyes of the non-Gypsy population.[79] Discriminatory treatment by outsiders strengthens group identity by creating a defensive response to such hostility. Also, the knowledge and experience of hostile treatment, in both the past and the present, of self and others similarly situated informs the living memory of Gypsies and becomes part of the oral tradition and culture of the group. Indeed, this forms one of the 'historical threads' that serves to unify the people.[80] In other words, persecution heightens the sense of difference, strengthens in-group feeling and creates an 'us and them' mentality.

Persecution rallies activists together, and the history of past and even present ill treatment is a starting point for the demand for equal rights. Indeed, a key objective of political activism is to *create* an ethnic identity as part of this overall strategy. In this way the story of persecution is being used deliberately and consciously for a political purpose. For some this has reached an unacceptable level:

> Much of this discourse about the discrimination against and the victimisation of Romanies is highly ideological. They are realities but there is also a political exploitation of those realities in creating a language to promote it. I have found this language less and less satisfactory. It has become a ritualistic presentation and interpretation of history only from the point of view of discrimination and victimisation of the group.[81]

This criticism, for the moment, remains primarily confined to debates among the activists themselves, despite raising important questions about the way Gypsy history is being written and the processes of constructing, and manipulating, identity.[82] In terms of a more general public awareness of the issues, the campaign for equal rights and the demand for recognition of Gypsies as a legitimate ethnic group founded on previous and existing discriminatory treatment are now being endorsed by a wider public sympathetic to such issues. As their history and treatment parallel the history of other important ethnic groups, notably and most obviously Jews, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to deny rights and ethnic status to one group while allowing it to others similarly situated and treated. This has even led to various degrees of collaboration and mutual recognition of the histories shared by the two groups. Articles in the journal of the *Institute for Jewish Policy Research* have commented on the 'numerous parallels' between the history of anti-Gypsyism and anti-Semitism, with similar stories of demonisation in books, sermons, drama and art, ghettoisation, and the shared myths and stereotypes which draw on images of the wandering Jew and the nomadic Gypsy, spreading disease, and tales of child abductions, murder and violation. Daniel Strauss has noted that the violence of the anti-Gypsy stereotype has been 'rehearsed, learned and handed down in a manner rivalled only by the anti-Semitic stereotype'.[83] Undoubtedly partly as a result of these parallel pasts, some of the main champions of the Gypsy cause are of Jewish origin and collaboration has now begun to take on a more organised form with the emergence in the United States of America of the Romani–Jewish Alliance.

Even so, the link with identity is also a problematic one. As well as the contribution made to ethnicity, the history and experience of persecution can also have an opposite effect. A common response of persecuted groups is not to further announce their separateness but rather to adopt strategies calculated to minimise the differences with the host precisely in order to avoid further persecution. The demise of difference and a separate identity is seen as a price worth paying. Such strategies might involve speaking the same language, wearing the same style of dress, adopting indigenous names and pursuing a way of life which does not mark out the group for any special treatment. In this way some of the more obvious and visible manifestations of a separate identity are concealed or lost through processes of integration and assimilation. While this does not necessarily mean that the more private aspects of a separate identity are not retained, it does raise obvious problems for the maintenance of a separate group, and ethnic, identity.

Ethnic boundaries, kaleidoscopes and mosaics

The construction of the ethnic Gypsy, both by outsiders and by Gypsies themselves, shows the complexity of the debates that surround the concept. There are differences in terms of identifying the essential characteristics of

identity, and we can find a host of varying perspectives around issues of origin, diaspora, language, culture and persecution.

Having considered the dominant and influential representations of the ethnic Gypsy as found in scholarly texts and from the group itself, it remains now to return to some key questions about the nature of ethnicity itself raised in the previous chapter. In particular, it is necessary to consider the extent to which the ethnic Gypsy has been formed by the group itself or from outside, where this identity fits into the primordialist/circumstantialist/constructionist debates, and whether the identity is static and unchanging or something which is constantly remade and remodelled. Finally, it is necessary to consider issues around group homogeneity and the value, and indeed accuracy, of seeing the group as having a transnational identity in which ethnicity supersedes and overcomes difference within the group and competition from alternative identities.

The various perspectives on ethnicity present contrasting analyses of how we should understand processes of group formation and identity. The primordialists offer an essentialist analysis which depends on the idea of a fundamental core or essence which is natural, unchanged and unchanging. In contrast, the other perspectives, which talk of myths, inventions and constructions, indicate that groups and group identities are not natural and instinctive but, rather, are built, developed, reproduced and changed.

Much of the writing on Gypsies remains locked within the primordialist straitjacket and Gypsy identity is seen as unchosen, traditional and inherited. Most of the ethnic advocates, albeit sometimes unwittingly and unknowingly, adopt an approach and arguments which have clear parallels with the Gypsy lorists, but with the more excessive crudities of nineteenth-century racial theory removed. A belief in fixed, impermeable barriers and a natural given identity remains strongly evident in many writings. This is presented as such an unchallengeable position that alternative analyses are treated not only with suspicion and derision, but also with the accusation that they are an attempt to deny Gypsies their true ethnic status. Rather than seeing the other perspectives as alternative ways of understanding the nature of ethnicity, the language of myths and construction present in the circumstantialist and constructionist perspectives are taken to indicate that any sense of a distinctive Gypsy identity is false and artificial and that ethnicity has no meaning in relation to the group.

Therefore to a large extent the primordialist perspective continues to present a picture of an identity which has remained, in all its main essentials, static over a long period of time. Inevitably there is a recognition that there have been a few changes, for example, in employments and specifics of lifestyle, but changes in the Gypsies' social structure, normative systems, culture, beliefs, rules, taboos and character are thought to have been minimal.[84] Often, the unchanging or traditional features are seen as the core, and the modern features as superficial or deliberate façades. When mention is reluctantly conceded of the latter, the details of the changes are often left vague.[85] By resisting outside pressures and the 'vagaries of history', the Gypsy essence has remained strong.[86] The strength and

persistence of this original identity and character are explained by their marginal status as outsiders and traditions of persecution which see them remain isolated from other groups. Also, it is argued, their traditional culture, or *rromanipé,* only permits as much involvement with the non-Gypsy world as is necessary for social and economic survival,[87] with intermixing seen as leading to defilement and spiritual disharmony.

This desire to identify the essential core of 'Gypsyness' has reaffirmed the old Gypsy lorist, and racist, belief in an unchanging and static identity. While this has long been the standard and traditional way of understanding and representing groups, and is an inevitable outcome of the processes of stereotyping, in recent years there have been signs of a shift from this position. Increasingly it is being recognised that identities are not fixed but instead are flexible, and are mobile rather than naturally self-perpetuating.[88] This newer perspective is evident, for example, in some recent works on Jews: 'The term "Jew" is far from being a fixed identity (there are many competing definitions of group membership and of "who is a Jew".'[89] Webber continues: 'Like all social groups, Jews are constantly redefining themselves – which today means also reformulating the main features of their historical consciousness.'[90]

It is now possible to identify similar arguments being used in relation to Gypsies. Okely notes that Gypsy culture is in constant evolution, borrowing from and interacting with majority culture as part of the process of continually creating and recreating the Gypsies' cultural autonomy.[91] Similar arguments can be found in the work of Jean-Pierre Liégeois, where reference is made to the 'shifting universe' of the Gypsies, especially in relation to culture. He writes:

> Gypsies and Travellers as a whole must not be considered a static society, rigidly set since time immemorial and reproducing itself in an identical mould.[92]

> Gypsy culture, like all cultures, is in constant evolution, and more so than others because change is one of its traditions and adaptation a constant necessity.[93]

Instead, then, of a Gypsy culture that is static, we are presented with a picture that focuses on its dynamic nature, able to borrow from and interact with non-Gypsy society, not as a mark of deference, subordination, dilution or assimilation, but as a form of reinterpretative ingenuity and creativity. Indeed the concept of change and adaptation is even identified as a distinguishing feature of the group, linked to processes of survival in a hostile and persecutory environment.[94]

The notion of change has been introduced into the debate out of a recognition that ideas of static and unchanging identity, character and culture are not sustainable. However, the difficulty remains that although change is now more often referred to there is little attempt to map exactly the nature and extent of

these changes or to address the critical issue of how or if changes and variations in values and cultural traits undermine, strengthen or have little effect on the key defining features, the so-called 'essential core', of Gypsy identity. The significance of this modification in approach can be found in the broader discussions about the homogeneity or diversity of Gypsy cultural identity.

The concept of ethnicity, by virtue of its search for common characteristics and its emphasis on these features as the primary definers and essence of a people, inevitably has a homogenising effect on group identity. Priority is given to those features shared by the majority, if not all, of group members wherever they may be situated in time and place. While, of course, the identification of shared characteristics as the basis of group identity is entirely valid, it is also the case that differences within the group must be acknowledged and accommodated. Even limited reading on the nature and experience of Gypsies worldwide reveals that major differences exist between Gypsies in different nations and also between groups or tribes within nations. Of concern, then, is how those advocating the ethnic definition of the Gypsy address these problems.

Too often there is a tendency and temptation simply to ignore diversity as this is mistakenly taken as an admission of the weakness of the boundaries that have been created. A common approach is therefore simply to deny or downplay differences, to reassert the image of Gypsies as one people, and to focus almost exclusively on the shared features and similarities, such as ancestry/roots, physical appearance, beliefs and values, and taboos. Boundaries are thus maintained without challenge or complication, and separateness remains unchallenged.[95]

However, a second response is to allow and even highlight difference and diversity:

> It is a mistake to think, as novelists and screenwriters tend to do, that Gypsies constitute a homogeneous population. As the migrating population spread out into Europe, the different groups became associated with different countries, over time acquired local characteristics, and intermarried with local populations.[96]

The acquisition of local characteristics and the probable assimilating effects, partial or total, can be multiplied across all Gypsy populations and migrations, over an extended period of time. This has led to the logical admission by some that Gypsies do not form a unified ethnic whole and that there is no such thing as one single Gypsy culture.[97] There is now growing mention of different groups of Gypsies, each with their own cultural heritage, origins and lineage, and of the 'very different' groups going under different names who 'distinguish themselves sharply from one another'.[98] Significantly, the idea of 'multiculturality' rather than monoculturality has begun to appear in the ethnic discourse.[99] Moreover, it is also noted, in a challenge to the idea of a worldwide brotherhood, that these varied groups often have little or no contact with each

other and in some cases are even hostile to each other. Jean-Paul Clébert talks in one instance of the ethnic unity and homogeneity of the group, but then states that differences in customs, manners, taboos, laws, justice, superstitions and religious beliefs can be found not only between groups but within groups; that is, differences in precisely those areas that other commentators take as the basis for common identity.[100]

The most obvious explanation of diversity is that it stems from the varied national origins and development of the worldwide Gypsy population. This is variously indicated by the fact that the label 'Gypsy' is often prefixed by a national affiliation, or even that the label itself or the spelling denotes a particular country of origin. This means that the Gypsy population is permitted to have certain features which are shared in common with the majority national community. Of these, perhaps the most important are the ways that they assimilate into the customs of the country in which they live. They are a part of that community, with an identity and loyalty to that state, shown by their willingness to fight and defend that country in time of war. Yet, despite sharing aspects in common with other indigenous inhabitants of a particular state which then also separate them from Gypsies in other nations, they are also said to be apart from it by virtue of a transnational identity which extends beyond national borders and unites all Gypsies behind the banner of a non-geographically specific Romani nationalism. In other words, Gypsies have a dual identity and a dual nationalism.

The notion of national difference is taken one stage further by reference to the notion of tribes. These may cut across nation-state borders or exist within them. For example, Michael Stewart, writing on the Hungarian Gypsies, identifies three tribal groupings: the Hungarian Gypsies, the Boyash and the Romany-speaking.[101] More widely, the various tribes of the Romany include the Romanian coppersmith group known as Kalderash (or Kalderas/Calderari/ Kalderari), Tshurara, Lowara/Lovari/Lovari Bare, Macraya/ Macharaya, Polska Rom, English Romanichals, Bashalde, Manus, the Sinti and Rom of Germany and North Europe, the Kaale or Kale of Finland and Wales, the Boyash/Beash of Romania, Vlah/Vlach, the Churari/Cherhari/Chergashi of Bosnia, Erlii (the sedentary Muslim Roma in Bulgaria), Rudari, and the Nawwar of the Middle East.[102]

The recognition of difference has, then, permitted the construction of an image of the group as an ill-defined, diversified and 'extremely heterogeneous' people who do not share a common nationality, language or dialect, social or economic organisation, occupations, customs or culture.[103] The question is how such differences and heterogeneity can still be accommodated within the ethnic paradigm. First, it should be noted that the desire to present Gypsies as comprising one part of a larger totality is found more among the writings of outsiders than among the group themselves.[104] Essentially this is achieved in three main ways. First, a belief is retained in some sense of shared core identity that pulls together this disparate population and, despite diversity, reference is

still made to the 'cohesion' of Gypsy societies derived from 'the force of collective awareness'.[105] Despite going further than most commentators in identifying differences among Gypsy populations, Michael Stewart then writes: 'Gypsies are a part of our world and yet are distinct from the rest of us. They live in the world we know, yet they seem to offer an alternative way to be in our world.'[106] Next, the Gypsy identity is reaffirmed by separation and distinctiveness from the host population and, finally, linked to this, from other nomadic groups who lack the ancestry, traditions and culture of the Gypsy population. Tribal differences are seen as being perfectly compatible with the 'one people' definition. For example, in Germany the Sinti and Rom are seen as two distinct ethnic groups, different in terms of their origins, lifestyle, housing, education, employments, language and religion. Yet, despite this, they are brought together by virtue of their original point of origin from the Punjab region of North India.[107] Moreover, and importantly, the Gypsies' separate identity is consolidated by comparison with the host population, and particularly with those who appear to be closest to them in terms of lifestyle and behaviour, other nomadic groups. This would include groups who have no claim to Indian ancestry, such as the Irish Travellers, Dutch *Woonwagenbewoners,* Norway's *Omstreifere,* Germany's *Jenische,* Spain and Portugal's *Quinquilleros,* Scottish tinkers, and English didakais and New Age travellers.[108]

Having established broad grounds for inclusion/exclusion, many contemporary Gypsiologists then describe the worldwide Gypsy population as a complex and rich 'mosaic of ethnic fragments', a kaleidoscope, an archipelago of separate 'sub-ethnic' groups, and also as a people among whom there are 'many ethnic groups' or a 'range of ethnic groups'.[109] The difficulty caused by allowing ethnicities to exist within larger ethnicities for the most part remains unacknowledged by those putting forward this version.

The general picture that has been constructed is of a large transnational population consisting of separate tribes, national and occupational groupings in a kaleidoscope of identities. This in itself does not present a problem, as probably any dispersed population with varying patterns of settlement will show similar divisions without necessarily threatening the overall ethnicity. The Jews provide probably the most obvious example of this. The idea of multiple and even competing identities contained in the language of mosaics and kaleidoscopes, and the proposition that an individual, or a people, can take on a combination of characteristics, roles and identities, are both attractive and entirely reasonable. However, a problem does arise when these sub-groups are described as forming separate ethnicities within the larger ethnicity. Taking any of the definitions of ethnicity and the criteria for inclusion in an ethnic group, it is impossible to understand how one ethnicity can exist within another, or how one individual can simultaneously belong to two ethnic groups, without some dilution of at least one of these categories. The process of differentiation is not being undertaken on the basis of class, income, religion or other variables which might serve to divide groups, but on precisely those criteria of origin, behaviour and belief that are said

to define ethnicity, In effect, the tribes are being attributed with an ethnic identity different from the larger Gypsy ethnicity.

Such a situation can only be possible if the criteria for one are specific and for the other loose and general, so that both can be accommodated. A possible comparison would be with the use of Asian as an ethnic category, which conceals within this broad, and to some worthless, label a large number of national and ethnic groupings. Of central concern is how a people will identify themselves, and whether their self-identification is with the larger or smaller grouping. With the Gypsies, some of the sub-ethnic groupings refuse to recognise anything in common with each other, are often antagonistically opposed to each other, and lack any sense of an overall common identity given to them by others. Despite this, Gypsiologists still show a reluctance to abandon the transnational, global grouping. Essentially, though, the value of the larger and broader category has been brought into question. As soon as precision is lost the concept of ethnicity becomes flabby and worthless, and to talk of ethnicities within ethnicities serves only to confuse further an already complex concept.

A similar point is made in Jonathan Webber's recent and controversial examination of Jewish identity, where he questions the value of the larger, unifying category and replaces this with the diversity of sub-ethnicities. Webber is keen to move away from the analysis of Jewish identity which 'stresses the intrinsic if not indissoluble bonds [culture and destiny] which link diaspora Jewish communities together'.[110] This approach, which holds on to the notion of a worldwide, transnational Jewish identity, is described as 'a quasi-mystical, mythological or essentialist view of world wide Jewish bonds'.[111] Webber suggests an alternative starting point for identifying and defining Jewish identity when he stresses:

> the infinitely large set of different ethnic histories which characterise the experience of Jews in the different countries and societies in which they have lived.[112]

The question thus becomes one of balance and dominance. In the case of an immigrant, nomadic and diaspora people, the main question revolves around the identity taken by these people in the various countries in which they live and work and whether national differences become more or less important, in the sense of defining who a people are, than any original, pre-diaspora group identity. Specifically, in relation to Gypsies the question has to be asked whether there is such a thing as an overarching Gypsy ethnicity which transcends national boundaries and unites the Gypsy people wherever they may be. When a claim is being made for a transnational ethnic Gypsy identity it is based on some notion of a core, or essential, identity based on the criteria discussed previously. This in turn creates a boundary that excludes those who have married outside the group and also those pursuing a similar lifestyle but of different origins. The difficulty comes with the next stage, which attempts to accommodate marked

differences between identified Gypsy groups by taking the overall identity and then breaking it down into a kaleidoscope of sub-divisions. In one form the divisions are referred to as tribes and reflect variations between and within nations, based on objective and visible differences in, for example, language, culture, behaviour, social and economic organisation, or origins.

In effect, the argument is whether there exists a distinctive and exclusive core, or essence, and whether this is to be found in their cultural or spiritual identity (or both), and the extent to which this is shared and recognised by all members. The alternative, which abandons the idea of an essence or core and instead focuses on difference, if followed to its logical conclusion could raise doubts as to the whole notion of Gypsy ethnicity.

Conclusion

The struggle for the recognition of ethnic status for Gypsies has largely been achieved within the specialist academic community engaged in Gypsy studies, but only small headway has been made outside this limited field. In order for Gypsies to be brought within the legal provisions outlawing discrimination and racism, Gypsies and their legal representatives had to win a hard-fought prior ruling that they constituted an ethnic group. In an attempt to win public sympathy for the plight of Gypsies, especially those victimised by public and official persecution in central Europe, journalists in the broadsheet media implicitly or explicitly favour the ethnic representation of the people. Yet this official and journalistic categorisation is not one necessarily accepted by the readership of the press and the wider public. In short, the arguments in favour of an ethnic identity for Gypsies have left many observers, commentators and outsiders unconvinced. The significance of this should not be underestimated. The battle to achieve recognition that they form a legitimate ethnic group is of crucial importance as the linked issues of civil rights and ethnicity cannot be separated.

In many respects the way that Gypsies have been seen and defined as an ethnic group takes no account of the problematic nature of this classificatory system or the debates taking place around the constructed nature of ethnicity. For many years, the ethnic school of Gypsiologists remains locked within the primordialist/ethnographic paradigm, reifying culture, stressing Indian origins, and keen to identify the elusive unifying core of Gypsyness. A considerable portion of writing on the ethnic Gypsy was embroiled within the primordial stew, serving up the same diet of a mono- and essentialist culture. The search for a real or true past, in the case of Gypsies, remained the holy grail pursued by Gypsiologists, and the obsession with ‘proving’ Indian origins continued with the advent of DNA testing. Whether this is proven or not is, though, largely immaterial, as the myth or belief in such origins has been formed and cemented as the essence of the people. Ethnicity was therefore portrayed as something which was natural, organic, given and fixed. That is, the conceptual approach to understanding

Gypsy identity has to a large degree remained in the first phase of the evolution of the ethnic concept and fails to incorporate or even address the later perspectives. In particular this has meant that the complexities raised by multiple and competing identities and the changing character of identity have been largely, though not entirely, unexplored.

Within much of Gypsy studies there appears to be a shared but unstated belief that to accept notions of social construction, and with it the idea of the role of myths, imagined pasts and invented traditions, is somehow to deny the validity of the concept of ethnicity and shared identity. This, though, should not be the case. There is now an acceptance that national identities, also based on notions of boundaries and shared characteristics, have been constructed on precisely the same kind of imagined pasts, and yet there is no doubting their validity or force. Indeed an identity built on such foundations can be stronger and more real than anything built on truths and facts. The same can be said for ethnicity. There is a movement away from ideas of monocultural ethnicity towards a recognition that individuals and groups are constantly in a process of negotiating and renegotiating identity. Jonathan Webber has made this same point forcefully, if controversially, in his discussion of Jewish identity:

> The idea that Jews are a single people possessing a single, or at least united history assuredly has great power at the level of theology or political ideology; but, in practice, the overwhelming majority of European Jews today also function as citizens of the respective countries in which they live. To put the point more strongly but no less accurately, they are only *partially* [original emphasis] Jewish in the sense that their cultural identities as Frenchmen, Italians, and so on operate alongside, if not in competition with, their identities as Jews…. It means that the assumption that Jews form a single, transnational collectivity (whether in Europe or world-wide) needs careful empirical, ethnographic qualification.[113]

The word ‘Gypsy’ could easily be substituted for ‘Jew’ throughout this extract. The key issue is of multiple identities, and a main concern is with the outcome of any such co-existence and competition and whether identities are abandoned, diluted or rendered partial in the process. The work by Webber is undoubtedly sensitive and there will be those who fundamentally disagree with his analysis. However, this should not obscure the very important questions about identity that are being asked. While Gypsiologists have perhaps not gone as far as Webber in abandoning the ‘one people’ idea, there have been changes and the balance is perhaps shifting between the primordialists and the social constructionists. While it is too early to say that the former of these perspectives is in terminal decline, it is the case that many of its assumptions and arguments are now questioned and challenged rather than simply accepted. The movement towards the revised perspective which allows for complexity and the shifting

nature of Gypsy identity can now be found both in recent studies and in the works of those whose earlier writings were more in tune with the primordial outlook.

With so much at stake, the debates, arguments and bitter disagreements about Gypsy ethnicity are emotionally charged and highly sensitive. But this should not mean that the problems with the concept and its application to Gypsies should be avoided. Issues relating to the nature of identity, identity formation and its development and evolution, counter-identities, change over generations, national differences, varied experiences and the elusiveness of self-identity are problems which cannot, indeed must not, be simply ignored or swept away in pursuit or defence of some mythical or mystical essential whole.

Notes

1 T. Acton, 'True Gypsies – myth and reality', *New Society,* 6 June 1974, p. 563.
2 Jean-Paul Clébert, *The Gypsies,* translated by Charles Duff (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 17. This book was first published under the title *Les Tziganes* in 1961. Clébert's book, although strongly criticised by Gypsiologists, is also seen as having an influence in shaping popular understanding of Gypsies.
3 Donald Kenrick, 'Gypsies and Jews', *Jewish Socialist,* Vol. 5, Spring 1986, p. 11.
4 D. Kenrick and S. Bakewell, *On the Verge. The Gypsies of England* (London, 1990), p. 8.
5 I. Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing. The Gypsies and their Journey* (New York, 1995), pp. 85, 103. See also, for further examples, I. Hancock, 'American Roma: the hidden Gypsy world', *Interface,* No. 28, November 1997, p. 19; chapter 1 of Ian Hancock's *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1987) is entitled 'Out of India', and he states, on p. 7, that the Rom are of northern Indian origin. See also K.W. Lee and W.G. Warren, 'Alternative education: lessons from Gypsy thought and practice', *British Journal of Educational Studies,* Vol. xxxix, No. 3, August 1991, p. 313. In the opening pages of J.-P. Liégeois, *Gypsies and Travellers: Socio-cultural Data, Socio-political Data* (Strasbourg, 1987, p. 14), it is stated that Gypsies come from the East, that linguistic evidence reveals Romani to be an Indian language derived from Sanskrit, and that migrations occurred from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries.
6 Marek Kohn, *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science* (London, 1995), p. 195.
7 The dates usually given for their appearance in Europe are: Crete 1322; Corfu 1346; Yugoslavia 1348; Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary 1415–1417; Paris 1427; Poland 1428; Wales 1430 or 1440; Spain 1447; Scotland 1492 or 1505; Sweden 1512; England 1514. See Eric Sunderland, 'The population structure of the Romany Gypsies', in Michael H. Crawford and James H. Mielke (eds), *Current Developments in Anthropological Genetics, Vol. 2, Ecology and Population Structure* (London, 1982), p. 126. As noted by Sunderland, this indicates a movement from southeast Europe to the Balkans, central Europe, and then to northern and northwest Europe. See also Clébert (1967), pp. 54–55. Dates are usually based on the first mention of Gypsies in official documents.

8 See, for example, the new Routledge series on global diasporas under the general editorship of Robin Cohen. In particular, see Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London, 1997). See also W. Willems and L. Lucassen, 'Gypsies in the diaspora? The pitfalls of a biblical concept and the muddy backwater of science', unpublished typescript. I am grateful to the authors for providing me with a copy of this item.
9 For an excellent fictional representation of this journey back to Romanestan, see M. Farhi, *Children of the Rainbow* (London, 1999).
10 See, for example, I. Hancock, 'Foreword', in W. Guy (ed.), *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe* (Hatfield, 2001), p. viii.
11 For a good discussion of legends relating to origins and an account of the migratory pattern, see Liégeois (1986), pp. 33ff.
12 See N. Gheorghe and T. Acton, 'Political factors affecting the presentation of Romani identity', paper presented to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Seminar on Romani Studies, University of Greenwich, 29 March 1993.
13 D. Kenrick, *Gypsies from India to the Mediterranean* (Toulouse, 1993), chapter 1; D. Kenrick, 'Foreign Gypsies and British immigration law after 1945', in T. Acton (ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), p. 100.
14 I. Hancock (1987), p. 7; A. Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992), chapters 1 and 2; M. Brearley, 'The Roma/Gypsies of Europe: a persecuted people', *Institute for Jewish Policy Research/Policy Paper,* No. 3, December 1996, p. 5; I. Hancock, 'The Romani diaspora', *The World and I,* Part 1, March 1989, p. 613.
15 D. Kenrick, 'Romanies without a road', *Contemporary Politics,* No. 232, March 1978, pp. 153–156.
16 Kenrick (1993), pp. 9, 53.
17 For example, part of the evidence depends on references in ancient texts to *'atsingani'* or *'athingani',* a term allegedly applied both to Gypsies in Byzantium and East Europe and also to heretics. Similarly, references to nomadic peoples are also taken to refer to Gypsies even though other migrant groups existed at the time.
18 I. Hancock, 'Roma origins and Roma identity: a reassessment of the arguments', typescript. I am grateful to Ian Hancock for providing me with a copy of this paper.
19 I. Hancock, 'Introduction', in I. Hancock, S. Dowd and D. Rajko (eds), *The Roads of the Roma* (Hatfield, 1998), p. 18; also I. Hancock, 'American Roma', p. 20. Hancock states that this theory is supported by a 'growing number of specialists', though names/sources are not provided.
20 This theory has been seen as an attempt to give historical stature to the Gypsies by giving them a proud warrior past, contrasting with earlier theories which located their origins among the poorest and most feeble caste of pariahs or Suders. Willems and Lucassen state that the Rajput theory stems more from political ambition than from scholarly evidence. See Willems and Lucassen, 'Gypsies in diaspora'. Hancock discounts this accusation as the work of those who, unable to escape their prejudices, refuse to accept that Gypsies could have such respectable ancestry.
21 D. Kenrick, 'Gypsies and Jews', p. 9.
22 I. Hancock, 'The East European roots of Romani nationalism', *Nationalities Papers,* Vol. xix, No. 3, Winter 1991, pp. 251–252.
23 Hancock, 'Roma origins', p. 6.
24 H. Asseo, 'Introduction', in Kenrick (1993). This is to draw on the work of such eighteenth-century scholars as the Englishman William Marsden. Kenrick stated

that '[p]eople who speak Hindi, Punjabi or Gujerati will recognise most of the Romani words. Bengali or Sylheti speakers may know some.' See Kenrick (1993), p. 54.

25 I. Hancock, 'Introduction', in Hancock, Dowd and Rajko (1998), p. 18.

26 Fraser (1992), p. 10.

27 'Historical linguistics cannot determine the racial and ethnic origin of the early Romani speakers. There is no inherent or necessary link between language and race.' Fraser (1992), p. 22.

28 Kenrick (1993), p. 10.

29 For a useful description of the process, see Richard Askwith, 'Bound by a silken thread', *Independent on Sunday Magazine,* 16 May 1999, p. 10.

30 Eric Sunderland, 'The population structure', pp. 125–137.

31 Ian Hancock, 'Roma origins', p. 5.

32 Sunderland, 'The population structure', p. 127.

33 *Ibid.,* pp. 128, 131; see also Sarabjit S. Mastana and Surindel S. Papiha, 'Origin of the Romany Gypsies – genetic evidence', *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie,* Vol. 79, No. 1, 1992, pp. 43–51.

34 T. Acton, 'Authenticity, expertise, scholarship and politics: conflicting goals in Romani studies', typescript of professorial lecture, University of Greenwich, 1998, p. 7. I am grateful to Professor Acton for providing me with a copy of his talk.

35 Fraser (1992), p. 32.

36 Hancock, 'Roma origins'.

37 T. Acton, 'Categorising Irish Travellers', typescript, 1992, p. 5. Acton also criticises Okely for her lack of familiarity with Romani dialects and for the source of her funding. Similar points were also made by Acton in the paper delivered at Leiden. See T. Acton, 'The social construction and consequences of accusations of false claims to ethnicity and cultural rights', paper presented at the Leiden University Foundation Centennial Conference, 'The Social Construction of Minorities and Their Cultural Rights in Western Europe', held on 12–14 September 1990, University of Leiden, the Netherlands. See also T. Acton, 'Review of Judith Okely, *The Traveller Gypsies', Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 6, No. 3, 1983, pp. 385–386. Elsewhere, Acton, in an article which specifically addresses the notion of the ethnic Gypsy, defines ethnicity as the 'possession of a distinct language, with its own literature or oral tradition, distinct organisation, relative endogamy, and so forth'. See T. Acton, 'The ethnic composition of British Romani populations', *Roma. Journal of the Indian Institute of Romani Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 4, 1979, p. 50. While this picks out key cultural aspects, the 'and so forth' leaves the definition unsatisfactorily vague and imprecise.

38 Okely makes it clear that her doubts about the single Indian origin of Gypsies should not be used to discredit the idea that they form an ethnic group. See J. Okely, 'Ethnic identity and place of origin: the Traveller Gypsies in England', in H. Vermeulen and J. Boissevain (eds), *Ethnic Challenge: The Politics of Ethnicity in Europe* (Göttingen, 1984), p. 52. Rather, Okely wishes to construct ethnicity according to a different set of criteria. See also M. Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, Colorado, 1997), for support of Okely's position. He states: 'Often this search for origins has been rather haphazard – any Indian, or, more particularly, northern Indian, custom that reminds people of Gypsy behaviour is

seen as ancestral. Sadly, this kind of explanation is widely seen as acceptable' (p. 236).

39 She also suggests that political objectives have guided and compromised intellectual integrity in the writing on the group. See J. Okely, 'The invention and inventiveness of Gypsy culture', paper presented at the Leiden University Foundation Centennial Conference, 'The Social Construction of Minorities and Their Cultural Rights in Western Europe', held on 12–14 September 1990, University of Leiden, the Netherlands. See also the discussion section at the end of Nicolae Gheorghe's paper in T. Acton and G. Mundy (eds), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), pp. 168–169.

40 The 'place of origin has not seemed significant to Gypsies themselves, although their current country of residence and that with which they choose to associate is significant in specific contexts'. See J. Okely, 'The invention and inventiveness of Gypsy culture', p. 51. It should be noted that in playing down the importance of origins, the denial of the Indian dimension forming a central part of her own definition of Gypsy identity, Okely seeks to give weight to her argument by recruiting the views of Gypsies themselves.

41 Okely (1984), p. 54.

42 *Ibid.,* p. 52.

43 *Ibid.,* p. 64.

44 *Ibid.,* p. 58.

45 Fraser (1992), p. 7. See J.-P. Liégeois (1986), p. 45; T. Acton, 'True Gypsies', p. 563.

46 Acton refers to the emergence of small national populations of Gypsies 'travelling largely within national boundaries, mixing culturally, genetically and linguistically with the local host populations'. See T. Acton, 'The ethnic composition of British Romani populations', pp. 44, 50.

47 Okely (1984), pp. 58–59.

48 Liégeois (1986), p. 45.

49 [J. Okely], 'Gypsy identity', in B. Adams, J. Okely, D. Morgan and D. Smith, *Gypsies and Government Policy in England: A Study of the Travellers' Way of Life in Relation to the Policies and Practices of Central and Local Government* (London, 1975), p. 28.

50 Hancock, 'Romani diaspora', p. 616.

51 See [Okely], 'Gypsy identity', pp. 36, 42, 61. See also Kohn (1995), p. 203.

52 'Many customs among the Roma would seem to claim an Indian ancestry, not just in Eastern Europe but wherever they live in diaspora, from Australia to Argentina.' See Fonseca (1995), p. 106. In one sentence Fonseca has introduced various components of Gypsy ethnicity: customs, labels, origins, diaspora and a transnational identity.

53 See I.Hancock, 'The Gypsies/Roma', *Shmate. A Journal of Progressive Jewish Thought,* Issue 17, Winter 1987, pp. 6–7.

54 See Liégeois (1987).

55 See, for example, Hancock, 'The Gypsies/Roma'; T. Acton, S. Caffrey, S. Dunn and P. Vinson, 'Gender issues in accounts of Gypsy health and hygiene as discourses of social control', in T. Acton and G. Mundy (eds), *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), pp. 164–179; Liégeois (1986). The literature on this topic is extensive.

56 Stewart (1997), p. 205. He also states that the notion of pollution/purity serves to divide the Gypsy world into 'polluted gazos' and 'pure' Rom and of the Gypsy body into 'pure' upper and 'impure' lower.
57 J. Okely, 'Why Gypsies hate cats but love horses', *New Society,* 17 February 1983, p. 251.
58 Fonseca (1995), pp. 12–13.
59 *Ibid.,* pp. 48–49. However, she later concedes that the codes are 'not always vigorously upheld in every district and dialect' (p. 80).
60 Okely states quite explicitly that these beliefs and practices, which for the most part remain largely invisible to the 'outsider', act 'as a symbolic boundary which has to be won every day by a vulnerable minority in a struggle against the dominant majority' (Okely, 'Why Gypsies hate cats but love horses', p. 253).
61 Anecdotally, in the course of my research I was told the story of a Gypsy, who came from a long line of horse-dealers and who still lives a Gypsy life, who was shown the section in Judith Okely's book concerning *moxadi* regulations, especially those passages relating to women's periods, and this person had never come across such practices in her experience.
62 Acton *et al.* also point to a further purpose, in that they provide the outside researcher with a 'mark of authenticity' as the obtaining of information on such internal, not to say secretive, practices and beliefs is taken as an indication of the diligence of the researcher and of his or her ability to penetrate to the core of the people. See Acton, Caffrey, Dunn and Vinson, 'Gender issues', p. 3.
63 For example, see Michael Stewart (1997), whose work is based on groups of Gypsies living in settlements. Also see Marcel Courthiade, in *Interface,* Issue 8, p. 8: 'nomadism is not an absolute criterion in Romani identity, and…sustained migration is more a result of other factors – notably economic – than an innate characteristic'.
64 Liégeois (1987), p. 53; see also Liégeois (1986), p. 54, for a similarly worded expression of the same idea.
65 'Even when sedentary a Gypsy remains a nomad in values and spirit.' See Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), p. 13.
66 Liégeois (1987), p. 75.
67 Marcel Courthiade, *Interface,* Issue 8, p. 8.
68 See Anthony P. Grant, 'Aspects of the linguistic interface between German and Romani', in S. Tebbutt, *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-speaking Society and Literature* (New York and Oxford, 1998), pp. 65–80.
69 Hancock, 'Romani diaspora', pp. 650–651. This view is also expressed in the work of Liégeois (1987).
70 Liégeois (1986), p. 64.
71 Fonseca (1995), p. 58.
72 *Ibid.,* pp. 15, 24–25.
73 Stewart, in Acton (1997), pp. 86–87. Note that Stewart's conclusions are based on a study of the North Hungarian Vlach community in the mid-1980s.
74 Stewart (1997), pp. 12–13.
75 Clébert (1967), p. 20.
76 See Hancock (1987). See also Ronald Lee, 'Review of Hancock's *The Pariah Syndrome', Roma,* No. 28 January 1988, pp. 43–45.

77 The history of persecution has been well documented. In particular, see Hancock (1987); D. Mayall, *English Gypsies and State Policies* (Cambridge, 1988); D. Crowe and J. Kolsti (eds), *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe* (London, 1991); Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), chapter 2; Liégeois (1987); Liégeois (1986), chapter 3; J.-P. Liégeois and N. Gheorghe, *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority* (Minority Rights Group International Report, London, 1995), updated in March 1998. For a much fuller list of relevant texts, see the excellent bibliographies by G. Tyrnauer, *Gypsies and the Holocaust. A Bibliography and Introductory Essay* (Montreal, 1991), and D. Tong, *Gypsies: A Multidisciplinary Annotated Bibliography* (New York and London, 1995).

78 T. Acton, 'Categorising Irish Travellers', typescript.

79 In one rather unusual expression of this, it seems that enslavement becomes the sole criterion for membership of the Gypsy group even though other more usual criteria were absent:

> the Rudari, like other bondsmen, were called Gypsies. But they spoke no Romanies, and apparently they never had. They shared no customs with the Roma, such as traditional dress or pollution codes. So *were* [original emphasis] the Rudari Gypsies? Are their descendants? Absolutely: they were slaves.
>
> (Fonseca, 1995, p. 180)

80 Hancock, 'Romani diaspora', p. 616.

81 N. Gheorghe, 'The social construction of Romani identity', in T. Acton (ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), p. 161. This point has also been made in the work of Zoltan Barany.

82 Interestingly, there is a further parallel here with Jewish history, and the Holocaust in particular. It has long been accepted that the Shoah has been and remains a major component of Jewish identity worldwide, and yet in recent years questions have been asked about whether this has been taken too far.

83 Daniel Strauss, 'Anti-Gypsyism in German society and literature', in Tebbutt (1998), pp. 81–90. See also Brearley, 'The Roma/Gypsies'; Clébert (1967), pp. 32ff; Wilhelm Solms, 'On the demonising of Jews and Gypsies', in Tebbutt (1998), pp. 91–106.

84 B. Lauwagie, 'Ethnic boundaries in modern states: *Romano Lavo-Lil* revisited', *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 85, No. 2, 1979, p. 325. Hancock states: 'it is truly remarkable that, a thousand years later and thousands of miles away from the homeland, Gypsies have retained so much of their original character'. See I. Hancock, 'American Roma', p. 19. Similarly, Angus Fraser, though also mentioning their 'remarkable powers of adaptation', also talks of the Gypsies managing to *'preserve* [my emphasis] a distinct identity'. See Fraser (1992), p. 1.

85 For example, Fonseca (1995) suggests late in her book (p. 239), that in order to survive the Gypsies have had to adapt and that this has involved a 'rejigging' of ethnic identity. Not only does this seemingly contradict earlier positions in her book on constant and fixed identity, but it is also an area which remains wholly unexplored.

86 Liégeois (1986), p. 85.

87 Hancock, 'American Roma', p. 19.
88 See J. Webber, 'Jews and Judaism in contemporary Europe: religious or ethnic group?', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 20, No. 2, April 1997, p. 271.
89 *Ibid.,* p. 270.
90 *Ibid.,* p. 275.
91 J. Okely, 'Cultural ingenuity and travelling autonomy: not copying, just choosing', in Acton and Mundy (eds) (1997), p. 190; see also K. Lee, 'Australia—sanctuary or cemetery for Romanies?', in Acton and Mundy (1997), pp. 67–81; Okely (1975), p. 161; Stewart (1997), p. 28.
92 Liégeois (1987), p. 46.
93 Ibid., p. 80.
94 Stewart (1997), p. 5.
95 One example of the attempt to hold on to the notion of a supra-national and common identity for all Gypsies can be found in the claims made about a group of Albanian Gypsies who were settled and living in a quarter, shared with non-Gypsies, known as Kinostudio, on the outskirts of Tirana: 'Still, the Roma of Kinostudio had more in common with those far-flung Gypsies than with their fellow Albanians, among whom they have lived for nearly six hundred years.' See Fonseca (1995), p. 22. In other words, despite Albanian ancestry dating back 600 years and a long tradition of settlement and living with and among non-Gypsies in the same quarters, Fonseca still believes it credible to maintain that there existed among the group a sense of a larger Gypsy identity. It is not made clear whether this common Gypsy identity was something felt by the Albanian Gypsies or whether it was Fonseca's own views on Gypsy identity which were then imposed on the group. The absence of evidence to support this claim would suggest the latter. Fonseca is not alone in the desire to present a picture of a group bound together by a common identity and ethnicity, often referred to as both strong and cohesive. See also Lee and Warren, 'Alternative education: lessons from Gypsy thought and practice', p. 315.
96 Hancock, 'American Roma', p. 21. See also Fraser (1992), p. 1; Acton, 'Review of Judith Okely'; Acton, 'True Gypsies', pp. 563–564.
97 Hancock, 'Romani diaspora', p. 616.
98 Kenrick and Bakewell (1990), pp. 7–8; Liégeois (1986), p. 13.
99 N. Gheorghe and T. Acton, 'Citizens of the world and nowhere: minority, ethnic and human rights for Roma during the last hurrah of the nation-state', in Guy (200l), pp. 54–70.
100 Clébert (1967), pp. 19–20.
101 See Stewart (1997), pp. 10–11. Stewart also notes that even this classification over-simplifies things, as there were also differences of language, history, recent origins, family organisation and culture within each of the groups. Elsewhere Kertész-Wilkinson identifies the three Gypsy groups in Hungary as the Vlach Gypsies or Rom, the Beash, who speak Romanian and Hungarian, and the Romungri, who are the longer-established Gypsy group. See I. Kertész-Wilkinson, 'Song performance: a model for social interaction among Vlach Gypsies in South-eastern Hungary', in Acton and Mundy (1997), p. 97.
102 See I. Iliev, 'Somebody like you: the images of Gypsies and Yoroks among some Bulgarian Moslems', in Acton (1997), p. 56; D. Kenrick, 'Foreign Gypsies and British immigration law after 1945', in Acton (1997), pp. 100–110. The term Vlach

Rom is sometimes used to group together the four tribes of Kalderari, Lovari, Churari and Macharaya, and the term Vlax is used for all descendants of Roma, loosely described as a group who lived in slavery for five centuries. Acton, Caffrey and Mundy state that 'Vlach is a convenient label attached by non-Gypsy experts referring to the Romanian influence common to the dialect of these four groups'. See T. Acton, S. Caffrey and G. Mundy, The theory of Gypsy law', in Acton (1997), p. 151. See also Z. Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge, 2002).

103 'Europe's Gypsies: are they a nation?', *Economist,* 25 November 2000, pp. 47–48. See also Guy (2001).

104 '[M]embers of the so-called Gypsy society find it hard to think of themselves in terms of the totality' (Liégeois (1986), p. 57.

105 'Despite the diversity, the feeling of belonging to the same category of individuals is stronger than the sense of difference that divides them' (Liégeois (1986), pp. 83–84). Liégeois also writes that it is a diversity 'which forms an entity'. See Liégeois (1987), p. 46. Elsewhere, however, Liégeois writes that collective memory, which would seem analogous to collective awareness, is described as 'more mythical than historical'. Liégeois (1987), p. 13. Despite being told by one writer that Gypsies do not form a monolithic whole, we are also informed by the same writer that the world can be divided into Roma and *'gadze'*. See Hancock, 'The East European roots of Romani nationalism', p. 254.

106 Stewart (1997), p. 12.

107 S. Tebbutt, 'Sinti and Roma: from scapegoats and stereotypes to self assertion', in Tebbutt (1998), pp. ix-xiii.

108 See Kenrick (1993), p. 38.

109 See Lauwagie, 'Ethnic boundaries', p. 318; Fraser (1992), chapter 9; Liégeois (1986), pp. 13, 16; Acton, 'Foreword', to Hancock (1987), p. ix; Acton, 'The social construction', note 3, p. 17. Liégeois states:

> Gypsies or Travellers form a mosaic of small groups of different kinds, a shifting mosaic, the pattern of which is constantly changing, a kaleidoscope in which each element retains its distinctive features. There can be no generalisation, then, when it comes to origin, history, language, habit or occupation.
>
> (Liégeois, 1987, p. 7.)

The last sentence is most revealing as it is precisely generalisations about these features which commentators use to construct the transnational identity and ethnicity of Gypsies. See also Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, 'Historical and ethnographic background: Gypsies, Roma, Sinti', in Guy (2001), pp. 33–53.

110 Webber, 'Jews and Judaism', p. 260.

111 *Ibid.*

112 *Ibid.*

113 *Ibid.,* p. 259.

9
Nuisances, dead dogs and gypsies[1]

Gypsy as nomad, nomad as gypsy

The gypsy as nomad is a persistent theme throughout the history of the group and is a feature of all the representations that have been considered so far in this study. However, in both the racial and ethnic variants nomadism is just one of a range of other features and characteristics that identify the gypsy. Moreover, nomadism has created a number of difficulties for those presenting the racial and the ethnic picture, notably around the need to distinguish the gypsy from other nomads and also to accommodate the actuality or possibility of gypsies turning from the road to a settled way of life. The final definition and representation of the gypsy extracts this key feature of nomadism and elevates it to the position of the prime, single defining characteristic of the group: gypsies are defined as persons and families adopting nomadism as a way of life, in which travelling and living in moveable dwellings are regular and habitual, if not permanent, features of their lives. The boundaries of the group have been widened because other restrictive criteria, such as origins, ancestry, culture, are not applied. The process of widening is usually accompanied by the loss of capitalisation and the term gypsy is spelt with a lower-case 'g'.[2] With this final definition the dilemmas of differentiating within the nomadic population are thus reduced, though, as will be seen, not entirely overcome, and the notion of the settled gypsy is relegated to a forgotten corner.

This equation of gypsy with nomad and travelling with gypsying is commonplace in English culture and politics.[3] Indeed it can be argued with some justification that this is the most popularly held of all the definitions and impressions of the group. In 1908 W.M. Gallichan, writing about the state and the gypsy, commented that

> pleasant people have often an unfounded prejudice against the Romané, whom they, as often as not, wrongly recognise in every professional beggar, and in the proprietors of swingboats and cocoanut *[sic]* shies.[4]

This failure to distinguish between the different components of the itinerant population, and to group together as gypsies all mumpers, tramps, muggers, cadgers and others, can be found among all types of people, and in all periods and situations. In 1910 a Select Committee of the House of Lords, reporting on proposals for a Moveable Dwellings Bill, identified a two-part nomadic and vandwelling population: the showmen class as one, and the gypsy class as the remainder.[5] *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* described as a gypsy 'a person who habitually wanders or who has the habits of someone who does not stay for long in one place'.[6] Kevin McGrath, writing about education provision in *New Society* in 1973, used the term gypsy 'in an inclusive sense, to take in all travellers'.[7] The most significant location of this particular definition is, though, to be found in legislation. In England the association of gypsy with nomad received official sanction by means of the controversial Highways Act of 1959 and the Caravan Sites Act of 1968.[8]

Under the 1959 Highways Act it was an offence for a gypsy or trader to encamp on the highway, though the definition of who constituted a gypsy was left to the discretion of the courts.[9] Although some prosecutions failed as a result of the difficulties over definition, in the main the courts adopted a wide interpretation in order to bring in as many van dwellers and travellers as possible under the regulatory provisions of the law.[10] In one case it was even stated that a person 'could be a gypsy today and not tomorrow' on the basis of whether they were travelling or not.[11] Similarly, in the High Court case of *Mills v. Cooper* (1967) Lord Chief Justice Parker, starting from the premise that the idea of a Gypsy race was 'too vague of ascertainment and impossible to prove', stated that gypsy means 'a person leading a nomadic life with no, or no fixed, employment and with no fixed abode'.[12] He hastened to add that this definition did not derive from any existing statute but was 'merely…the general colloquial idea of gypsy'.[13] In the same case Lord Justice Diplock stated:

> I would define [a gypsy] as a person without fixed abode who leads a nomadic life, dwelling in tents or other shelters, or in caravans or other vehicles. If that meaning is adopted, it follows that being a gypsy is not an unalterable status. It cannot be said 'once a gypsy always a gypsy'. By changing his way of life a modern Borrow may be a gypsy at one time and not a gypsy at another.[14]

The third judge, Mr Justice Ashworth, agreed with both judgements and this High Court ruling entered into the statute books by means of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act, which obliged local authorities to provide sites.[15] Section 16 of this Act defined gypsies as 'persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin', though excluding travelling showmen.[16] The addition of 'habit of life' or 'way of life' was to indicate that wandering had to have a purpose and that it was a way of living that had become customary as a necessary and characteristic part of the gypsies' lives.[17] Even this, though, left judgements on the purposeful

nature of travelling and the customary aspect open to individual interpretation, and arguments about definition have continued in magistrates' courts, county courts, high courts and appeal courts ever since.[18] The opportunity for a revision to this definition was provided when Sir John Cripps undertook a review of the 1968 Act, which was published in 1977.[19] He noted that he had repeatedly been asked 'What or who is a gypsy',[20] to which he replied by reaffirming the official position: 'I use the term "gipsy" to include…any person of nomadic habit who travels about the country living in caravans or tents',[21] with 'habit' or 'style of life' referring to mode of upbringing, self-employment, a separateness from the rest of society and a belief in travelling. Cripps asked for suggestions how this definition could be improved, but none were forthcoming and it was felt that the existing definition was sufficient to enable local authority officers to distinguish gypsies from dropouts and others who did not properly pursue nomadism as a way of life.[22] This was again confirmed in a further report, published by the Department of Environment in 1986, which also stated that 'most people' did not believe that the ethnic definition of gypsy was possible and that the broad nomadic definition served a legal and practical purpose.[23]

This issue was later to reappear and be given added urgency and topicality by the expanded numbers of New Age Travellers who took to the roads in the spring and summer of 1992, forcing the issue of definition back into the open.[24] If they had been accepted as legitimate travellers and defined as gypsies under the terms of the 1968 legislation local authorities would have been obliged to provide them with site accommodation. The prospect of this led to further discussion in newspapers and the courts about where the limits of the group should be drawn, partly informed by the campaign of the National Gypsy Council to deny New Age Travellers and 'hippy' groups the label 'gypsy'.[25] A Court of Appeal ruling, on 27 May 1994, in the case of *Regina v. South Hams District Council,* defined the purpose of travelling as making a living and seeking work. If travelling lacked this economic purpose, or if it was for cultural or other reasons, then the inference was that the person travelling could not be a gypsy.[26] New Age Travellers were seen as a group who had recently taken to nomadism, lacking both a nomadic ancestry and a purpose for or habit of travelling. Local authorities were finding that the obligation to provide sites for gypsies was forcing them to make *ad hoc* revisions to the broad definition of gypsy as nomad by further refining 'way' or 'habit' of life in order to exclude certain categories of traveller. Even so, the revisions still stopped some way short of acceptance of an ethnic classification.

This definition thus takes one single feature, nomadism, as the defining characteristic, and so ignores or sees as insignificant or irrelevant the range of other characteristics defined by other commentators, including origin and ancestry. That is, it denies the group any distinctiveness or separate cultural identity other than that which results from nomadism, and in so doing challenges other definitions and representations of the group. Ultimately, then, this definition denies the group a racial or ethnic identity. In effect they are being

defined as a population rather than as a people.[27] It defines them by what they do rather than who they are: to go travelling is to go gypsying, a gypsy way of life is a travelling way of life. In short, the size of the group has been greatly expanded when compared to the racial or ethnic definitions and has adopted a simplified and more fluid boundary between those inside and those outside the group. It is possible to become a gypsy by adopting this way of life, just as easily as a person stops being a gypsy once it is abandoned, whether out of choice or as a result of forced settlement and assimilation.

The reasons for the adoption of this particular definition, and its significance in terms of the responses to and treatment of the group, can only be fully understood if located in the longer and remarkably consistent history of the state's attitude to nomadism.

Nomadism and the state

The presence of an itinerant and nomadic population in Britain is long established. There have been various attempts to try and distinguish between its many components, based primarily on criteria of origin, employment or trade, and the habits of nomadism. Further variants include distinctions made on the basis of wealth and religious beliefs.[28] Nomadic groups are often identified by reference to their national backgrounds, such as Scottish tinkers and Irish or Welsh travellers, and these also often overlap with particular skills or trades. However, it is this latter feature that provides the most commonly used system for labelling, with groups known by their particular nomadic occupation: for example canal boatmen, fieldworkers, showmen, navvies, tinkers and hawkers. To these can be added those thrown into unemployment and seeking work, such as the tramping artisans and discharged militiamen. The habits of nomadism covered various aspects, including whether itinerancy/nomadism was temporary or permanent, whether it was a solitary experience or included family, and whether the population lived in vans, barns or tents.

Such criteria have obvious attractions and, if workable, could have provided the basis for the differential treatment of the respective groups. In practice, however, it was found that the boundaries between each were flexible and fluid. No one group or individual stuck to just one pattern or type of nomadism, itinerancy was both temporary and permanent and changed over years and seasons, and often nomads turned to a variety of trades, not just one, both seasonally and over time.

The impossibility of distinguishing between a travelling population who looked alike, behaved alike, and who both imitated each other and, it is argued, intermixed and interbred is regularly mentioned.[29] J. Thompson, writing about the street life of London in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, remarked that the nomadic tribes of London were 'so mingled into one confused whole, as to render abortive any attempt at systematic classification'.[30] It has been said that magistrates, policemen, newspaper reporters, 'even the enlightened British

public', fail to distinguish between the various components of the nomadic population and simply group all together under the label gypsy.[31] Broadly, all were seen as comprising part of a vast vagrant, beggar and vagabond population unified by their wandering, idle disposition and thieving habits. In short, they were an unproductive community parasitical upon the Christian, honest and hard-working majority. This popular perception both contributed to and was reinforced by the official response.

Any modern state has to be aware of the needs and activities of its citizens and take steps to control and regulate, to ensure conformity with laws and other standards of behaviour, and to protect the majority, whether in terms of their health, morality or property. The position of a nomadic population in an overwhelmingly sedentary-based society and culture demanded particular attention. Travelling touched a variety of nerves: for the most part travellers/nomads were from the lowest socio-economic groups and engaged in seasonal and temporary labour, largely in the service trades. Income was usually small and irregular, thus putting the group on the unacceptable edge of poverty and unemployment, from which it was a short fall into beggary, vagrancy and vagabondage. For some, this was a necessity, forced by circumstance. For others, though, it was a chosen way of life that set the group apart in terms of their attitudes, values and morals. Travelling and nomadism were widely seen as a recourse for the outcast, the lazy, the unemployed, the pariah, the vagabond and the vagrant. Those pursuing this way of life were at the very bottom end of society in terms of income, health, cleanliness and morals. They ignored property rights, flouted education and health legislation, and, in short, were the dirty, depraved beggars, the wandering criminals always escaping the law, and the work-shy parasites. Deprivation, deviancy and criminality were thus combined in this broad group to make a volatile and unstable cocktail.

It would have been impossible and unwise, given the relationship with the economy and the need for a mechanism of moving labour to where it was needed, for the state simply to outlaw all forms of nomadism. The key dilemma facing the state was how and where to differentiate the welcome, respectable, acceptable and necessary nomad from the nuisance, parasite, drain and threat. The state had to provide the parameters and guidelines and to control and regulate, by means of licences and other laws, where necessary. In practice it proved difficult to draw a clear line between the two and the tendency was first to group all nomads and itinerants together and to assume criminality, vagrancy, vagabondage and nuisance, and to consider the exceptions later. The rationale for legislation and measures to be taken against the group centred upon accusations of dishonesty, the charge their presence made on local rates, the depredation they caused to property and land, their propensity to beg and the likelihood they would spread diseases and immorality.[32] The identification of this group as a social problem meant that a solution was required: to end nomadism by assimilating and absorbing the group into settled society.

The legislative response

Following the first appearance of gypsies, or Egyptians, in England the state was aware that there was a section of the itinerant population who were different, strange and from foreign lands, and so could be dealt with in a different manner from the native born. Put simply, the alien nuisance could be removed quickly and effectively by deportation. However, when the boundaries became blurred, when the first-generation migrants produced native-born children and inter mixing appeared to be taking place, then the state was concerned with the larger problems associated with nomadism rather than the smaller one of alien presence. As a consequence, although legislation continued to list the various component parts of the itinerant and nomadic population, this was primarily to ensure that no group escaped regulation.

In England the definition of gypsy as a nomad or wanderer, grouped alongside the wider and diverse itinerant population, first appeared in statutes dating from the sixteenth century.[33] Initially the categories of Egyptians and counterfeit Egyptians indicated that the state acknowledged some degree of difference among the nomadic population in Britain, but, as noted by Derek Hawes and Barbara Perez, 'with each new piece of legislation, there was less and less attempt to differentiate between the various kinds of itinerant'.[34] The state lost interest in differentiating between the nomadic groups in any way other than by the criterion of 'respectable', those with means of support and productively employed, and 'unrespectable', consisting of the vagabonds, beggars, vagrants, thieves and those not visibly employed. The itinerant population was listed in all its colourful guises, labels and job descriptions, but for the purposes of the law the concern was with their similarities rather than their differences, and gypsies became subsumed in the unrespectable vagabond and vagrant category.

Numerous statutes were passed relating to vagrancy from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century which brought within the terms of their provisions peddlers, tinkers, beggars, vagrants, rogues, vagabonds, the homeless, wandering soldiers and gypsies.[35] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries especially, there was growing alarm with those described as 'idle, vagraunte, loyterynge, sturdy roags, masterless men, lewd and ill disposed persons'.[36] In 1596 Edward Hext, a Justice of the Peace in the County of Somerset, wrote of the growing and 'infynt numbers of the wicked wandrynge idell people of the land',[37] a group which included Egipsions, 'that wycked secte of Roages'. Progressively the category of rogues and vagabonds had been enlarged to include all types of itinerants, nomads and other criminal or outcast groups.[38] Paul Slack, a major historian of Tudor and Stuart England, has examined in some detail the savage punishment of vagrants and like offenders that was characteristic of English social policy after 1600.[39] Such punishments included fines, committal to houses of correction, forcible return to the parish of birth and being 'stripped naked from the middle upwardes and openly whipped until his or her body be bloudye'.[40]

Thus, by the seventeenth century gypsies were regarded not as a foreigners but as part of the larger vagrant, rogue and vagabond population, subject to the same laws and penalties. Nomadism was equated with vagrancy and the latter evil was ranked alongside drink, prostitution and idleness in the list of unacceptable sins.[41] This provided the basis of a legislative response that was left virtually unchallenged until the latter part of the twentieth century, and this pattern of responses and the ferocity of the punishments carried into subsequent periods.

Under the 1744 Vagrancy Act, for example, magistrates could order the whipping or imprisonment of those who 'refused to work for the usual or common wages', including beggars, strolling actors, gamblers, peddlers and gypsies. They could also imprison wandering lunatics and 'all persons wand'ring abroad and lodging in alehouses, barns and houses or in the open air, not giving a good account of themselves'.[42] An example of the continuity in response, definition and language is provided by a resolution passed at the quarter sessions of Norfolk in 1817 which stated that 'all persons pretending to be gipsies, or wandering in the habit or form of Egyptians, are by law deemed to be rogues and vagabonds, punishable by imprisonment and whipping', thus duplicating early modern legislation.[43] The 1744 Act and other vagrancy legislation which still existed in the statute books were rationalised in 1822 and 1824 with the passing of new Vagrancy Acts.[44] To the defining features of wandering abroad and not being able to give a good account of themselves was added 'without visible means of subsistence'.[45] By this, in broad terms, all nomads and travellers were deemed by the state to be rogues, vagabonds and nuisances, and this all-encompassing and flexible definition remained the dominant official approach through to the post-1945 period.

Practical remedies

Identifying the cause of a nuisance was not, though, the same as remedying it, and the problems of serving a summons and applying the provisions of regulatory legislation were, of course, multiplied with a nomadic population. The 1887 Report of the Select Committee on the Temporary Dwellings Bill remarked on the difficulty in enforcing regulations concerning van dwellers compared with another group of nomads, the canal boatmen:

> The occupants of 'moveable dwellings' are a more troublesome class to deal with, more difficult to find, and they more easily evade proceedings, because they can more readily get out of the way.[46]

Moreover, if they were camped on private land the onus was on the landowner and his agents, rather than the police, to take action.[47] The frustrations caused by the inability to curb the gypsy nuisance were widely felt in West Parley, Dorset. The minutes of the meetings of the parish council between 1896 and 1914 reveal the range of tactics employed, from proposing new bye-laws to bringing in health

inspectors, education officers and the inspector of nuisances, petitioning the district council and then going over their heads to the Local Government Board.[48] This difficulty in finding a workable solution or even any agreement over who should take responsibility led to a range of strategies being adopted to deal with the menace and nuisance of gypsies and other nomads, not all legal.[49]

In order to overcome the difficulties of implementing existing legislation, proposals were put forward between 1877 and 1894 for a separate Moveable Dwellings Bill. The essential argument was that van dwellers should be treated the same, and so equally subject to the same rules and laws as anyone else. The problem was that they had managed to evade the law and so continue with a lifestyle seen as threatening, a menace and an evil. However, to bring them within the legislation meant the application of excessive powers of regulation and registration. The proposer, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, himself recognised the 'very large power' contained in Clause 5 of the original Bill, which gave any registration authority the power to prohibit moveable dwellings on specified places in their own area if considered a threat to public health or as likely to constitute a nuisance to the neighbourhood.[50] The proposals went much further than simply ensuring that nomads were regulated and controlled in the same ways as the rest of the population. In practice the legislation would have meant that the state had the power and authority to prosecute and harass on a range of pretexts. Although the Bill reached the Committee stage it was eventually rejected, primarily as it was thought to duplicate existing provisions. Indeed, the state was not without its powers when it came to dealing with travellers. Various national and local state initiatives were employed to move them on, force them to live and behave in a particular way, and circumscribe their way of life and activities.[51] Bye-laws were passed,[52] injunctions granted against landowners who provided travellers with sites,[53] special constables were appointed specifically to police this community,[54] instructions were issued to prevent gypsies from encamping and to force them to move when found encamped, and also surveillance strategies were employed by keeping a note of the names and addresses of nomads when they entered a district. Campaigns to co-ordinate the effective implementation of laws by parish and district councils were managed by alliances of landowners, tenants and the Chief Constable.[55] The police were urged to carry out surveillance and keep records, evictions took place, often with the assistance of the police, and gypsies were subjected to a very large number of prosecutions, often for petty offences. Even if the full weight of the British state was not brought to bear on the gypsies the constant drip of persecution, harassment, intolerance and surveillance clearly identified the group as an unwanted presence. On occasion, even less subtle tactics were employed. In York in 1975 a gypsy site was encircled with refuse dumped by the local Corporation,[56] and in 1998, following clashes between gypsies and the authorities, the police used CS gas and sent armed response units into gypsy sites.[57] Laws have also been passed to prevent their camping and their ability to buy land for sites.[58] This regular pattern of arrests and committals as vagrants

and persecutory resolutions and bye-laws passed at the local county level have meant that the representation of gypsies as criminals, vagrants and vagabonds has been an ever-present component of British life and culture for over 400 years.

While there are always dangers in generalising across long historical periods, there nevertheless appears to be a remarkable consistency in the reactions of the British state, at national and local levels, to the presence of the gypsy and nomadic population. The employment of the widest definition in order to group together as many of the nomadic population as possible, and then to stigmatise that group with a range of negative characteristics, conveniently summarised by the notion of 'nuisance', has spanned the period from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. However, there is a danger in presenting a picture of a powerful state machine remorselessly persecuting gypsies and other nomads with the intention of ending their very existence. In reality the state was often confused and awkward in its response, with disharmony between its various branches.[59] Although the state had sufficient statutory powers to proceed against this group, at the practical level a number of factors conspired against their effective implementation. These include a reluctance to begin the lengthy and expensive processes of prosecution, as well as disputes over public and private responsibility and, of course, the gypsy tendency simply to move on at the first sign of trouble. Even so, this should not be taken as a sign of relative tolerance or state ineffectiveness. Although the 1968 Caravan Sites Act could be seen as a step in the direction of greater tolerance by requiring local authorities to provide sites, this policy can also be seen as a means of controlling gypsies and securing their longterm assimilation.[60] Arguably it was not until the publication of the Cripps report on the 1968 Act and the subsequent 1979 Caravan Sites Bill that the central state showed an awareness of the need to move from control and regulation to a recognition of the rights of the group to pursue their chosen style of life.[61] Thus at the level of national policy-making there was some movement towards a recognition of gypsy and traveller rights and autonomy within a plural society, even though at the local level notions of autonomy and pluralism continued to be overshadowed by ideas of control and assimilation.

This response of the British state was far from unique, and official concern with nomadism, linking gypsies with vagrants and vagabonds, was a pattern repeated throughout Europe in the period when the modern central state was emerging.[62] William Axon, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, noted that 'there is not a country in Europe which has not legislated against them or endeavoured to exile them by administrative acts'.[63] W.M. Gallichan, about the same time, also noted that legislators throughout Europe classed the whole of the nomadic population under the label 'gypsy', seeing them all as wastrels and criminals.[64] Moreover, the pattern retains a similar shape through to the post-1945 period,[65] and in 1958 nomadism was even banned by law in Czechoslovakia.

Reproducing the gypsy as nomad

By taking nomadism and travelling as the primary defining feature, the various ways in which nomadism is seen by a sedentary society become attached to the gypsy group. It has already been seen that for the early modern period, for the most part, these images were negative. With few exceptions, this was to remain the case in the centuries that followed.[66] One major consequence of the representation of gypsies in such a critical light is that the label 'gypsy' has become a general term of abuse. At a major European football match in October 2000 an alleged racist exchange between two internationals was said to have been started by one of the players, Patrick Vieira of Arsenal, calling Lazio's Yugoslav defender, Sinisa Mihajlovic, 'a gypsy shit'.[67]

The nature of the travelling population meant that descriptions slipped easily into negative and abusive generalisations that were applied equally to virtually all those who came under the wandering umbrella. The nomadic population is commonly portrayed in terms of the threat they pose, whether to health, property or morals, and the parasitical effects of their chosen way of life, leeching on the life blood of the productive community. They have been, and continue to be, portrayed as carriers of plague, seditionaries, idle non-producers, subversives (political and ideological), troublemakers, thieves, petty lawbreakers, vagabonds, vagrants, parasites, evaders of the law, child-stealers, and a 'danger to health as a result of poor or non-existent sanitary precautions, water pollution and other nuisances'.[68] In 1979 a member of Sheffield Council is reported as saying, 'I wish you would stop calling them gypsies…they're cannibals, they're parasites on society', and to another member of the Sheffield Race Relations Committee is attributed the remark that gypsies 'were not human beings'.[69] Recent news reporting has called for an early-warning system, evoking a warlike state of siege, to tackle the gypsy problem and beat the gypsy invasion. The suggested strategies included the creation of a hotline for sharing information, tracking gypsy movements, alerting councils, lobbying government, pressing for increased powers, and staying one step ahead of the gypsies.[70]

This link between itinerancy and nuisance can be found in numerous sources and documents, official and otherwise, across a very wide period. Local officers of the state, from justices of the peace to health officers, have repeatedly referred to what was perceived to be the nuisance caused by the presence of encampments, and gypsies were regularly proceeded against on this basis.[71] With the expansion of the state and its incursion into such spheres as public health, sanitation, education and housing, by the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the concept of 'nuisance' was regularly employed to identify dangers to physical welfare, with fears of pestilence, contamination and contagion a common theme.[72] Clause 9 of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885, specifically identified tent, van and shed dwelling as a threat to the health of their inhabitants and others.[73] The Local Government Board was particularly concerned with the nuisance caused by aspects of nomadic living,[74] and van

towns were singled out for special attention and separate treatment by the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884–1885.[75] These 'colonies' of semi-permanent settlements, located in the poorer districts or on the edge of towns and cities, were identified as a growing problem requiring urgent remedy.[76] This general theme was echoed in a letter from a local landowner, Reginald Bray, to the Surrey Clerk of the Peace when he complained of the 'nuisance as caused by gipsies', and the Deputy Clerk of Essex County Council in 1904 produced a memorandum for a Parliamentary Committee entitled 'Nuisances by Gipsies'.[77] Chapter 11 of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, in 1906, dealt specifically with the spread of disease by vagrants and travellers. In epidemic times, according to Dr Armstrong, Medical Officer of Health for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who issued reports in 1894 and 1904 on vagrancy and smallpox, the vagrant was considered one of the chief carriers of the disease.[78]

One of the most substantial of turn-of-the-century official sources, the Select Committee Report on the Moveable Dwellings Bill of 1909, contains many references to their undesirable habits, their use of foul and profane language, stealing, begging, unsightly camps, lawbreaking, mischief making, and drunkenness. Tales are told of the insanitary and offensive conditions in which they lived, the indecency of the sleeping arrangements in vans, neglected children, and the fear they inspired in others by their begging, predatory and threatening attitude.[79] The testimonies given to the Select Committees of 1909 and 1910 and their final conclusions supported the notion of the nuisance caused by gypsies and nomads, giving weight to generally held myths and impressions.[80] This is despite the fact that little evidence was forthcoming to prove the accusations, and also that a number of witnesses spoke favourably about the health of 'the gipsy class'.[81]

More recently, a 1968 report into the working of the Caravan Sites Act also remarked on the nuisance, public-health hazard, community tensions and law-enforcement problems caused by unauthorised, and so unsupervised, sites.[82] Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, Labour-controlled Sheffield Council, at the same time as it was pursuing equal opportunity policies, and in a most revealing indication of the persistence of official attitudes, linked gypsies with dead dogs and other nuisances for purposes of official regulation and control. In 1979 the head of the council's legal department organised evictions from sites, using workmen hired from private contractors.[83] The inability to escape negative stereotypes, strongly reminiscent of these earlier reports, is also evident in an otherwise balanced and liberal report published by the Department of the Environment in 1986, which portrayed gypsies as awkward and unsatisfactory neighbours, variable in temperament and conduct, aggressive in argument and unreliable in their behaviour.[84] Even from this short list of examples, which could be multiplied without difficulty, it is evident that the association of gypsy and nuisance has long and deep roots, especially in the eyes of the central and local state.

Such images and representations can be found repeated in the works of a host of journalistic and other social commentators, especially throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Victorian compulsion for investigating and learning about strange people and their ways extended beyond foreign races abroad and had an important domestic dimension. Peter Keating, editor of *Into Unknown England,* provides a marvellous insight into the Victorian fascination with, and concern about, the unknown and the unacceptable at home: heathens, aliens, criminals, the underclass and, inevitably, the working class.[85] In many ways, a public curiosity about the manners and ways of 'low' society, mixed with a very real fear about the potential threat they posed, has roots which stretch at least as far back as the sixteenth-century rogue. By the nineteenth century the investigations were more rigorous and scientific, in appearance and theory at least, even though the sensationalism of the earliest accounts was by no means entirely abandoned. For reasons of their activities, behaviour and manner of living, the gypsies were, and remain, a prime target for such investigation. Newspapers and journals contain numerous stories and images of gypsy squalor, of dirty, litter-strewn sites, of ragged children running wild, and of the general nuisance caused.[86] Written text was often accompanied by cartoons, illustrations or photographic images to reinforce the picture of threat and nuisance.[87] Instead of the romantic Romany and the idyllic rural community, the representation was of a broad-based itinerant population characterised by poverty, illiteracy and ill health and perceived as a nuisance and threat: 'Without question, the gipsies are a great peril to the national health, and if once the plague gets established in these islands we shall be asked to deal with them under panic conditions.'[88] The same writer then likened the gypsies who moved to the Downs to rats who take to the hilltops in times of flood.[89]

The rejection of the romantic rural imagery was one consequence of the growth of urbanisation and the growing attention that was being paid to the problems of urban life, not only by the governments of the day but also by a large number of journalists, such as Henry Mayhew and his investigations into the London poor, Hollingshead and 'ragged London', philanthropic and charitable bodies, such as the Charity Organisation Society, and social investigators and observers such as Rowntree and Booth. Their response to the problems of city life was not to retreat into rural nostalgia but to go out, observe and investigate, with particular focus on issues around health, housing, poverty and criminality. Their enquiries took them to the mean streets of the metropolis and other major cities. Alongside the indigenous working-class poor, housed in tenements and slums, they also found a nomadic population, camped on wasteland and grouped in socalled van towns. The history, origins and folklore of these nomads were of little interest to the investigators. They were not blind to differences among the nomadic population, but these were usually attributed to wealth or occupation or, occasionally, to Christian beliefs. Gypsies were seen and treated as just one part of the nomadic population and as one part of the urban problem.

One of the best-known late nineteenth-century propagandists for this approach to the gypsies was George Smith of Coalville, a noted philanthropist, campaigner for brickyard children, and an advocate of legislation to control the van, tent and canal boat dwelling population.[90] His main objective was to find a remedy or solution to the problem and nuisance caused by the gypsies.[91] In order to achieve this, Smith removed the romantic cloak which his contempo-raries, the gypsy lorists, had put around the gypsies and instead revealed them as a mixed group of itinerants of varied origins whose way of life was an affront to the standards of a civilised society.[92]

Although Smith's studies on the gypsy population to some extent shared the contemporary obsession with the concept of the racially pure gypsy, he ultimately rejected this in favour of a definition which identified the gypsy with nomadism and a vagabond lifestyle. The distinguished, and purer, gypsies of the old days had long since disappeared, only to be replaced by a new group whose way of life had degenerated into lawlessness. He described this group, still labelled 'gipsies', as having 'three-fourths of the blood of English scamps and vagabonds in their veins, and the remainder consisting of the blood of the vilest rascals of India and other nations'.[93] Having established the subject of his concern, he then constructed a distinctive picture of the people and their habits. Throwing aside the 'tinted and prismatic spectacles' of 'daisybank sentimental backwood gipsy writers',[94] Smith claimed to present an objective and unsentimental account of the people and their way of life. He had no time for the romantic and poetic images of innocent, rural nomads communing with Nature and instead portrayed a thieving and threatening people who quarrelled, fought, avoided taxes and took pleasure from terrorising neighbourhoods of respectable house dwellers. In the opening pages of his books, and by using such literary devices as repetition, transcribing alleged conversations and factual descriptions, he presented the bleakest of pictures of gypsy life. In *I've Been a Gipsying* Smith wasted no time in conveying to the reader the most graphic and critical of pictures, and gypsies were described as dirty, idle, wild, heathen, sinful, wretched, cruel and prone to lying, swearing and fighting.[95] Their dwellings were stinking, sickening, and muddy. Adults were shown as bulky, dirty, greasy and idle looking, and their animals as poor, old and worn out. Women were bare bosomed and children were emaciated, illegitimate, ragged, filthy and ignorant. These vivid descriptions were further endorsed by visual images which confirmed the squalor, and, in one drawing, a pig is depicted fleeing from a gypsy tent, apparently unable to live in such filthy conditions.[96] The people were 'a putrifying mass', 'as black as the blackest beings…most creatures living in darkness'.[97] In the evidence given to the 1887 Select Committee on the Temporary Dwellings Bill, Smith further described the gypsy population as bastards, idiots, cripples and imbeciles.[98] Such language and images stemmed from a genuinely felt repugnance for the people and their way of living, combined with a paternalistic concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of children, and further wrapped in the phraseology and mentality of a devout man

for whom 'the Book of God was the god of books'.[99] At this point it is perhaps timely to consider the assessment of his biographer, Edwin Hodder:

> [George Smith] was a nervous, highly wrought, impressionable man. He saw visions and dreamed dreams; he mistook for realities 'the unsubstantial *[sic]* images of the brain'. It became difficult for him sometimes to discriminate between facts and fancies; it led him into a great deal of unconscious exaggeration.[100]

However, whether exaggerated and fanciful or not, his particular definition and representation of the gypsy group were repeated throughout this and his other writings. He reached a large audience through his letter-writing campaigns to newspapers and journals and found an influential audience through his addresses to Social Science Congresses, his promotion of the Moveable Dwellings Bill and attendance at official Commissions of Enquiry, including on the Housing of the Working Classes.[101] His legacy is evident in contemporary accounts and reports which justify persecution and harassment by recourse to Smith's language and imagery.[102] His influence extended even further than this, and a contemporary remarked that, '[i]n spite…of all protests, and in defiance of common sense the public seem to have accepted Mr Smith's "scroll written over with lamentation and woe" as a true account of Gypsy life'.[103]

A similar range and type of image of the gypsies can be found in literature, where the depiction of gypsies as rogues, vagabonds and villains is commonplace. For example, the threatening and lawless gypsy appears in *Roger de Coverley,* where he meets with lawless vagrants and has his fortune told, in Defoe's *Moll Flanders,* where the young Moll finds herself among an outlaw band of gipsies or Egyptians, in Fielding's *Tom Jones,* in which Partridge Jones falls in with a company of Egyptians, and in the *Life and Adventures of Bampfylde-Moore Carew,*[104] where Carew recounts his adventures with the gypsies.[105]

The balance between the accusations and images, whether from official or journalistic and literary sources, has changed remarkably little over time, and the unremittingly negative associations have remained constant. Different periods or epochs may have had their own moral panics and fears which gave an added significance to the images, but a similar underlying unease with the traveller is something which has given those images their force, strength and longevity:

> Although the stereotypes have changed somewhat over the centuries, the theme of the repulsive nomad is constant.[106]

The racial and ethnic image of the gypsy as strange, singular, secret and different conveys a sense of mystery, intrigue and attraction. The view of Smith, and others, was that gypsies and their way of life held no attractions, unless one was drawn to deprivation, depravity and misery.

Images of the nomadic gypsy: alternative perspectives

Given that the legal definition and approach are the basis for the persecution and prosecution of the travelling and gypsy population, this representation of the group has not won favour with those advocating the ethnic position. The spelling of gypsy with a small 'g' is usually taken to mean an identification or sympathy with this position and is strenuously opposed by the ethnic advocates. The reasons for this standpoint, especially in relation to their impact on the demands for civil and human rights, are understandable. However, the contest over definition does not simply rest with the ethnographic versus the parasitic nomad variants. There is also, to further complicate matters, a third way, which is based on a dissatisfaction with the methodology and arguments of the ethnographic approach but which is equally critical of the attempt to affix wholly negative and undesirable characteristics to the more widely defined group. The third version broadly accepts definitional parameters which define gypsy as nomad and migrant, but in this instance the group is represented as a viable, imaginative and productive economic community. The negative imagery which has traditionally surrounded the group is seen as the product of the antipathetic relationship between the settled and nomadic populations.

Indeed, this approach informed my own 1988 study *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society*. The title was itself an attempt to indicate that the subject matter was intended to cover those itinerant groups, broadly defined, treated similarly by a host society and state for reasons of their style of life. This particular definition and representation of the group was then used as the starting point for an examination of the social and economic activities engaged in by the group and the wider question of the relations with the non-nomadic community. In short, the main concern was with their positive social and economic contribution to majority society, and with processes of stereotyping, criminalisation and rejection.

Along similar lines, although making a more explicit statement in relation to the debates about identity and extending the focus to include the European experience, is the work of a group of Dutch historians working collaboratively and individually, Leo Lucassen, Annemarie Cottaar and Wim Willems.[107]

Their starting point is to accept the official definition of the gypsy as someone who leads an itinerant way of life, echoing the statutory definition adopted by, among others, the British state.[108] This is accompanied by a critique of the ethnographic perspective identified and illustrated in the previous chapter, a position which has been informed by recent work on nationalism, constructed identities and imagined communities. Although they state that their approach is not to deny ethnicity to gypsies and travellers, when referring to gypsy ethnicity they append the word 'alleged' and otherwise question the assumptions contained within the ethnic paradigm.[109] The portrayal of gypsies as a single and united people is seen as a mask that has been constructed and applied to the gypsies by outsiders and intellectuals. This approach is criticised for two main

reasons: first, there are strong doubts that the diverse gypsy groups spread across the world share a common descent; second, it is argued that the groups unified in the ethnographic perspective under a common banner show little or no awareness among themselves of a common history or unifying bonds. In short, the ethnographic perspective is said, in many respects, to be 'based on speculation, mixed with a fair proportion of teleological and wishful thinking'.[110] Those promoting this view are accused of methodological failures by refusing to acknowledge contrary evidence and selec-tively using data to fit a preconceived picture. Moreover, it is argued, this belief in gypsies as a single people with a range of fixed characteristics is thought to have stifled gypsy studies and even acted as its death-trap by limiting the avenues for research and closing off debate.[111] To an extent, and in particular cases, such criticisms are undoubtedly justified. However, there is a danger that such generalised criticism fails to recognise the differences between the many writers offering an ethnographic analysis, discussed previously, and also does not acknowledge the subtleties and nuances of some of the analyses. As a result, and not surprisingly, their stance has served to antagonise a number of long-established Gypsiologists.

From this basis they then proceed to investigate the reasons why the label gypsy evokes such negative associations, which, in their view, outweigh the romantic imagery.[112] Essentially their work surveys the legislation and policies directed against the Gypsies, which stigmatised and criminalised the group and provided an important link with the widely held antipathy shown towards them.[113] In this way 'gypsy' is seen as a label constructed by the dominant society to group together nomadic groups.[114] Deviant or criminal behaviour is seen as a consequence, not the cause, of stigmatisation.

The final component of their analysis is to penetrate beyond the stigmatisation, or negative construction, in order to identify the economic practices and behaviour of the group. By defining a heterogeneous travelling population as the focus of their concern, they construct an alternative image which favours a representation of the group as migrants, and more specifically as migrant labourers:

> to my mind, we should consider them in the first place as migrants, like other groups of newcomers: migrants with widely different backgrounds who have settled at different times in diverse European countries where they either managed to integrate successfully or did not.[115]

Further, they are defined as 'a class of artisans' among whom there is a 'guild like segmentation of vocations'.[116] The emphasis evident in the racial and ethnographic perspectives of a culturally distinct group here gives way to an approach which defines them according to their socioeconomic function and position, with the stigma removed. The difference, then, with the work of the Dutch histo-rians, and my own previous endeavours, is that the paradigm was being set in a different place from that adopted by anthropologists, ethnologists

and political scientists. To a degree this is certainly the result of disciplinary approaches and backgrounds, but the overriding and decisive difference hinges on the varied priorities given to origins.

Conclusion

Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar have argued that the work of Heinrich Grellmann at the end of the eighteenth century was a watershed in defining and representing the group, ensuring that the notion of gypsies as a separate people became dominant over their representation as vagabonds and vagrant outsiders.[117] This might have been the case among the emerging writers on gypsies and the later Gypsy lorists and Gypsiologists, but the idea that the stigmatised grouping and labelling of gypsies with other itinerants and vagrants 'faded into the background'[118] was certainly not the case if the state and wider public opinion are considered. The criminal and vagrant image continued, and continues, to have the strongest hold on the official and public imagination. Against this, alternative perspectives, including the ethnic, struggle to compete. The long history of this imagery also means that the more positive analysis and representation of nomadism and of nomadic groups face an immediate and large obstacle in the attempt to reverse traditional and officially sanctioned views.

In order to understand why the image of the gypsy as (unwelcome) nomad is the longest established of all definitions and representations of the group, it is necessary to appreciate the ways that nomadism/travelling/migrancy have been generally perceived in sedentary-based societies. The concern is multidimensional. In part, the perception is informed by a genuine concern for the poor and underprivileged, whether there by choice or circumstance. However, and more significantly, it also partly stems from a concern about the link between such a way of life and such criminal activities as petty crime and thieving. The nomadic way of life appears as an affront to values which lie at the heart of a sedentary society: permanence of relations, abodes, employment. The nomads' very existence and way of life raise questions about property, land use and trespass, and the mere fact of travelling places the nomad on the margins of law and order, and processes of socialisation and social control. The primary concern of the officers of the state, which is passed on to the members of sedentary society as a whole, is how to deal with this group. The differences between a gypsy, a vagrant, a tinker or a peddler are of little concern as the problem is the same. When they are grouped together in this way the labels are used interchangeably and the characteristics become shared by the group as a whole.

The official response has been to favour an all-encompassing definition that would bring the majority, though not quite all, of the itinerant and nomadic population within the parameters of legal measures designed to combat the menace and nuisance. More broadly, it was thought that the nomadic population could be reformed, settled, brought into the ways of settled society by persuasion and education. Their position as the dirty and degraded class was not thought to

be permanent or irredeemable. For some it was perceived as an illness that could even be cured by personal Christian contact.[119]

However, the hostility generated by the repeated negative images has also led to demands for far more extreme measures to be taken against the group. In the eyes of some, their filthy and depraved existence and their alleged disease-carrying habits caused them to be seen as almost sub-human, deserving of the most degrading treatment. There have been proposals to hose them down and so wash them away, and to steamroller them into the ground as if they were insects to be crushed underfoot. It has been suggested that cartloads of ashes should be tipped over their tents,[120] and that they should be sent to penal and labour colonies for no other offence than being nomads.[121] The images often associated with the negative representation of this definition employ ideas of infestation,[122] with the gypsies being seen as animals or sub-humans, and even likened to rats and pests. Such demands and language have their own logic, evoking memories of the Jews under Nazism. The criminalisation of the nomad and gypsy, undertaken by most European states, including Britain, not only permits such descriptions and associations but, arguably, does much to promote them.

Notes

1 The chapter title is taken from a diagram I am informed was produced by Sheffield Council illustrating their services that identified one area as 'Nuisances, Dead Dogs and Gypsies'. I am grateful to Ken Douglas, co-ordinator of the Sheffield Gypsy and Traveller Support Group in 1993, for this reference. I have been unable to locate a copy of the diagram.

2 This spelling will be adopted throughout this chapter.

3 The corruption of the noun, 'gypsy', designating a people, into a verb meaning 'vagabondage and nomadism' mirrors the use of 'jew' as a verb, meaning 'to cheat'.

4 W.M. Gallichan, The state versus the Gypsy', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* [hereafter *JGLS],* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1908, p. 351.

5 *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Moveable Dwellings Bill [H.L]; together with the Proceedings of the Committee. Ordered to be printed, 28 July 1910(1910),* para. 1, p. iii.

6 Quoted in *Race Discrimination Law Reports, Commission for Racial Equality v. Dutton,* 27 July 1988. See also Report of the Greater London Conciliation Committee, set out in Appendix III of Report of the Race Relations Board, 1967–1968, quoted in the *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989.

7 Kevin McGrath, 'Gypsy or gorgio?', *New Society,* 18 January 1973, p. 112. Confusingly, however, McGrath later refers to gypsy cultural identity and heritage and refers to the group as 'Romani'.

8 Section 127 of the 1959 Highways Act explicitly prohibited gypsies from camping by the roadside. As noted by Jean-Pierre Liégeois: 'If two caravans were parked side by side, one belonging to a Gypsy and the other to a non-Gypsy, only the

Gypsy caravan was in breach of the law.' J.-P. Liégeois, *Gypsies and Travellers: Socio-cultural Data, Socio-political Data* (Strasbourg, 1987), pp. 134–135.

9 This Act was repealed by the 1980 Local Government Act following the Cripps Report of 1977.

10 See A.M. Fraser, 'The High Court defines Gypsies', *JGLS,* 3rd Series, Vol. xlviii, Nos. 1–2, 1968, pp. 75–77.

11 Personal correspondence from Luke Clements of Thorpe's Solicitors, Hereford.

12 See 2 QB 459; *Race Discrimination Law Reports; Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, p. 467; A. Beale and R. Geary, 'New Age gypsies?', *Solicitor's Journal,* 11 February 1994, pp. 112–113. I am grateful to Ed Myers for this reference. See also J. Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 20. Okely notes that this non-ethnic definition was also repeated in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Census and Report on Gypsies, 1967.

13 Beale and Geary, 'New Age gypsies?', p. 112.

14 *Ibid.,* p. 112. Diplock incorrectly identified George Borrow, the nineteenth-century writer and novelist, as a gypsy. See also *Weekly Law Reports,* 13 January 1989, p. 467; A.M. Fraser, 'The High Court defines Gypsies', pp. 75–77.

15 See A. Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992). He states that this non-ethnic definition 'is today the only one extant in English statute law' (p. 3). See also Liégeois (1987), pp. 134–135. It should be noted that the local authority duty to provide sites for gypsies was abolished under the terms of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. See Luke Clements, 'Review of Derek Hawes and Barbara Perez, *The Gypsy and the State: The Ethnic Cleansing of British Society', Legal Action,* May 1995, p. 27.

16 Section 16, Caravan Sites Act, 1968. For a useful survey of the 1968 Act, and an analysis of its background, passage and effects, see D. Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Societies* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 94ff, and Okely (1983), chapter 7; see also Prof. G. Wibberley, *A Report on the Analysis of Responses to Consultation on the Operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968* (London, 1986). This report was carried out by the Department of the Environment at the request of the Select Committee on the Environment.

17 Amendment from Judge J. Harrison. See Beale and Geary, 'New Age gypsies?'.

18 See, for example, *Horsham District Council v. Secretary of State,* 1989; *Greenwich LBC v. Powell,* 1988.

19 J. Cripps, *Accommodation for Gypsies: A Report on the Working of the Caravan Sites Act, 1968* (London, 1977).

20 *Ibid.,* para. 1.5, pp. 1–2.

21 *Ibid.,* para. 1.9, p. 2.

22 See *ibid.,* para. 1.8, p. 2. See also E. Davies, 'Defining a Gypsy', Gypsy Sites Branch, Department of Environment, September 1984.

23 Wibberley (1986), pp. 5–6, 13.

24 For a discussion of the 'demonisation' of New Age Travellers and attitudes to nomadism, see R. McVeigh, 'Theorising sedentarism: the roots of anti-nomadism', in T. Acton (ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* (Hatfield, 1997), pp. 7–25.

25 The National Gypsy Council suggested a distinction could be made by drawing up a list of occupations that were followed by 'real' gypsies. See Wibberley (1986), p. 5.

26 'Law report', *Independent,* 15 June 1994.

27 This was also the line taken in Stalin's Russia, with the consequence that Gypsies were officially denied a separate ethnic or national identity.
28 See D. Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge, 1988), chapter 1.
29 For examples from the early modern period, see Chapter 3.
30 J. Thompson, 'London nomades', in J. Thompson and A. Smith, *Street Life in London* (1877, Reprint, 1973).
31 See 'Notes and Queries: British Gypsy crimes', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1908, p. 392. Although this statement dates from 1908 this idea can be applied to both the preceding and following periods.
32 See 'The Surrey Gypsies', *Spectator,* 18 December 1897, pp. 894–895.
33 See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of this. See also D. Mayall, *English Gypsies and State Policies* (Hatfield, 1995), pp. 18–26.
34 D. Hawes and B. Perez, *The Gypsy and the State: The Ethnic Cleansing of British Society* (Bristol, 1995), p. 12.
35 For a chronological list of these states, see Appendix 1, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy,* 1906, Cd 2852. See also C.J. Ribton-Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy and Beggars and Begging* (London, 1887). For the nineteenth century, see the discussion in David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1982), chapter 7. For a survey of county systems to suppress vagrancy, see G.K. Behlmer, 'The Gypsy problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies,* Vol. 28, No. 2, Winter 1985, pp. 231–252.
36 Ribton-Turner (1887), pp. 491–492.
37 Edward Hext, Justice of the Peace in Somerset, to Burghley, on the Increase of Rogues and Vagabonds, 25 September 1596, in R.H. Tawney and E. Power (eds), *Tudor Economic Documents: being select documents illustrating the economic and social history of Tudor England,* Vol. 2 (London, 1924), pp. 339–346.
38 Ribton-Turner (1887), pp. 701–702.
39 See P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988).
40 An Acte for Punyshment of Rogues, Vagabondes and Sturdy Beggars, 39 Elizabeth, c.4, 1597, in Tawney and Power (1924), pp. 354–362; see also Mayall (1995).
41 David Jones makes this point in relation to the nineteenth century, though this argument has an application that both pre-dates and follows this period. See David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1982), pp. 21ff. However, Jones argues that vagrancy became more conspicuous and less acceptable in the nineteenth century and talks of a growing determination to control the problem.
42 Quoted in M. Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain. The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750–1850* (London, 1978), p. 25.
43 See *New Monthly Magazine,* Vol. 8, 1817, p. 462. See also G. Black, 'Notes and Queries No. 12: Gypsies in Norfolk in 1817', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1914–1915, p. 242.
44 3 Geo IV, c.41, 1822; 5 Geo IV, c.83, 1824. See also Mayall (1995), p. 29, and Mayall (1988), p. 147. In this I describe the Act as 'perhaps the most pernicious piece of legislation in force against Gypsies and travellers in the nineteenth century'.
45 See Lionel Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds'. Vagrant Underworld in Britain 1815–1985* (London, 1988), pp. 12–13. Rose also notes that '[t]he 1824 Act, like its

forerunners, was directed not just at vagrants but the whole class of shady undesirable and suspicious characters with whom society was then infested'.

46 *Report from the Select Committee on the Temporary Dwellings Bill; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, and Minutes of Evidence. Ordered, by the House of Commons, to be Printed, 11 August 1887,* 279 (London, 1887), para. 224, p. 14.

47 See Letter from Capt. M.L. Sant, Chief Constable of Surrey, to the Right Hon. the Earl of Onslow, 24 May 1910, in a volume of press cuttings, Public Record Office, HO45/10995, File 158231/13.

48 West Parley Parish Council, Minutes of Meetings, 1896–1914. Dorset County Record Office.

49 See Mayall (1995), chapters 3 and 4.

50 See *Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords,* Vol. 187, 1908, cols. 447–466; Vol. 1, 1909, cols. 1,110–1,122; Vol. 7, 1911, cols. 97–110; Vol. 11, 1912, cols. 648–650; Vol. 15, 1914, cols. 684–687; Vol. 15, 1914, cols. 1,059–1,064; Vol. 16, 1915, cols. 236–237.

51 For survey of laws, see W.E.A. Axon, 'Laws relating to Gipsies', in W. Andrews (ed.), *Legal Lore: Curiosities of Law and Lawyers* (London, 1897).

52 See 'Extracts from the Reports and Minutes of the County Council in reference to (i) Moveable Dwellings, for the use of the Parliamentary Committee'. Surrey Record Office, CC28/249A.

53 Llanelly Urban District Council, Minutes of Health Committee, 1912, Llanelly Public Library; 'The Attorney-General v. Stone', *Justice of the Peace,* Vol. lx, 14 March 1896, pp. 168–169, reports the case of Heston & Isleworth Urban District Council's application for an injunction to prevent James Stone from allowing gypsies 'and other like people' from camping on his land. At the hearing the views of Stone and his witnesses were dismissed as partisan, extreme and worthless, whereas the plaintiff's witnesses were said to have given their evidence well and to be able to be trusted by the court. The injunction was granted under Section 107 of the 1875 Public Health Act.

54 See Instructions for Special Constable, Guildford Muniment Room, 85/29/21.

55 See West Parley Parish Council, Minutes of Meetings, 1896–1914. Dorset County Record Office; see also Letter of Metropolitan Police of 6 September 1913, Guildford Muniment Room.

56 D. Sibley, *Outsiders in Urban Society* (Oxford, 1981), p. 3; see also *Guardian,* 4 October 1975.

57 Ian Burrell, 'Call for forum to protect gypsy rights', *Independent,* 26 June 1998, p. 11.

58 1959 Highways Act, and the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960. See Sibley (1981), pp. 90ff.

59 See Mayall (1995).

60 See Sibley (1981), p. 100. Also see B. Adams J. Okely, D. Morgan and D. Smith, *Gipsies and Government Policy in England: A Study of the Travellers' Way of Life in Relation to the Policies and Practices of Central and Local Government* (London, 1975); Okely (1983), chapter 7.

61 Cripps (1977). For a review of other innovations in central government policy, and their limitations, since the mid-1970s, see Okely (1983), pp. 122ff.

62 See Gallichan, 'The state versus the Gypsy', pp. 350–358; L. Lucassen, '"Harmful tramps". Police professionalisation and gypsies in Germany, 1700–1945', *Crime, History and Societies,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1997, p. 30.

63 W.E.A. Axon, 'Laws relating to Gipsies', in W. Andrews (ed.), *Legal Lore: Curiosities of Law and Lawyers* (London, 1897), p. 166. Also, see J.-P. Liégeois, *Gypsies. An Illustrated History* (London, 1986), pp. 102–103; Lucassen, '"Harmful tramps"'.

64 Gallichan, 'The state versus the Gypsy', pp. 350–358.

65 See Annemarie Cottaar and Wim Willems, 'The image of Holland: caravan dwellers and other minorities on Dutch society', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, p. 68, on local authority stigmatisation of gypsies in Holland; Annemarie Cottaar, Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, 'Justice or injustice? A survey of government policy towards Gypsies and caravan dwellers in Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 42–66.

66 W.F. Stevenson, 'On vagabonds', *Good Words,* 1862, pp. 705–711, notes that a more positive picture of vagabondage was presented in the works of Goldsmith, with his story of the philosophic vagabond, and Wordsworth made heroes of one-legged tramps and evil-looking gypsy women.

67 *Independent on Sunday,* 22 October 2000. See also *Independent,* 19 October 2000. It is of note that Mihajlovic, accused of calling Vieira 'a black shit', was banned by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) for two matches but Vieira escaped punishment. Mihajlovic later made a public apology for his remark, though I am unaware of any such public apology from Vieira. See *Independent,* 26 October 2000.

68 *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Moveable Dwellings Bill [H.L]; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee. Ordered to be printed 28 July 1910* (London, 1910) [146], para. 6, pp. iv-v. See also Liégeois (1986), p. 134. See also Stevenson, 'On vagabonds', for a marvellous polemic against vagrancy, beggary and vagabondage, offering a broad historical and European framework. Stevenson sees vagabonds inhabiting a strange and terrifying world based on parasitism and imposture. More specifically, he notes that, 'besides giving Beggardom the vagabond impulse, the Gipsies gave it speech, and taught it the use of a secret tongue' (p. 709). These images can also be found in John Cripps' review of the workings of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act. However, the language used in the report is significant as the allegations are qualified by such phrases as 'they are said', 'can be troublesome', 'appear to be responsible'. Cripps therefore appears to endorse the accusations whilst recognising that the evidence is inconclusive. See Cripps (1977), p. 12. The widespread nature of these popular images was acknowledged in the BBC2 *Man Alive* programme 'They Steal Children, Don't They?', produced by Harry Weisbloom. See Jeremy James, 'The future for the gipsies: they want what many will see as the best of both worlds', *Listener,* 6 November 1980, pp. 607–608.

69 The first of these comments was made on a BBC Radio Sheffield programme in 1979, and the latter was reported in the (Sheffield) *Morning Telegraph,* 8 August 1968.

70 See *Herts Advertiser,* 2 July 1998, p. 17.

71 'English Gipsies', *Niles' Weekly Register,* Vol. 9, 16 September 1815, p. 41, reports on the committal of a group of Norwood gypsies as vagrants. See also a printed notice ordering the apprehension of Gypsies and other vagrants, January 1799. East Sussex Record Office, 412/29/1. This notice expressed the concern of the Chichester and Lewes magistrates about the 'great number of gypsies and other vagrants infesting the county'. In Bristol the inspector of nuisances was called in to investigate the problem and the perceived health threat caused by a Gypsy encampment. See Bristol Health Committee, Minutes of Meetings, 1908–1910, Bristol Record Office.

72 See *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, First Report, with Evidence, appendices, and index,* 1884–1885. The questions directed to the witnesses, including George Smith of Coalville, were highly leading and betrayed the prejudices of the commission, who were evidently seeking confirmation of their own views about van towns. These were duly confirmed by the two partisan witnesses.

73 48 & 49 Vict, c.72, 1885.

74 See *Reports of Medical Inspectors to the Local Government Board,* No. 252: *Dr Reginald Farrar's Report to the Local Government Board on the Lodging and Accommodation of Hop-Pickers and Pickers of Fruits and Vegetables* (1907).

75 *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, First Report, with Evidence, appendices, and index,* 1884–1885, pp. 56ff. See also Anon., 'The law as to gipsies', *Local Government Journal,* 18 July 1896, p. 465.

76 Not surprisingly, the van towns in and around London received most attention, especially those around Wandsworth, Battersea and Notting Hill. See, for example, E. Brewer, 'Gipsy encampments in the heart of London', *Sunday at Home,* 1896, pp. 113–114.

77 Letter from R. Bray to the Clerk of the Peace, County of Surrey, 27 September 1911. Guildford Muniment Room, 85/29/8. The situation in Surrey caused particular concern among the local landowning community. For a fuller discussion of this, see Mayall (1988), pp. 157–163. See also East Suffolk: Gipsies and Dwellers in Tents, Vans, &c. Synopsis of Replies received from District Councils and Superintendents of Police in East Suffolk, February 1899. Surrey Record Office, CC28/158; Herbert W. Gibson, Deputy Clerk of Essex County Council, 'Nuisances by Gipsies', being a memorandum presented to the Parliamentary Committee. Surrey Record Office, CC28/158.

78 *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy,* 1906, Cd 2852. The report notes that 'gipsies and dwellers in vans and tents who lead a vagrant or nomadic life are sometimes classed as vagrants', but adds that the gipsy is 'often of a respectable character' (p. 109, para. 397).

79 See Report of Sub Committee to the General Purposes Committee of the Surrey County Council on 'Nomads', 20 Dec. 1906, Appendix 1 of *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Moveable Dwellings Bill [H.L.]; Together with Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices. Ordered to be printed 14th October 1909* (London, 1909) [199]. Thomas Acton writes that 'the menacing scapegoat symbol of the Gypsy is built deep into the fearful and guilty subconscious of English culture and society'. T. Acton, 'True Gypsies – myth and reality', *New Society,* 6 June 1974, p. 563.

80 See, for example, R. Bray's evidence to the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Moveable Dwellings Bill, 1909, Public Record Office, HO45/10995, File 158231/9.
81 See *Report of Select Committee,* 1910, para. 6, pp. iv-v; *Report of Select Committee,* 1909, para. 358, p. 20, para. 369, p. 21.
82 Cripps (1977), p. iii.
83 See also the *Star* (Sheffield), 17 August 1979, quoted in Sibley (1981), p. 3.
84 Wibberley (1986), pp. 18, 19, 24.
85 P. Keating (ed), *Into Unknown England 1866–1913: Selections from the Social Explorers* (Glasgow, 1976).
86 For example, see J. St Loe Strachey, 'The Gipsy scandal and the danger to the commons', *National Review,* Vol. 59, 1912, pp. 459–472; 'The law as to Gypsies', *Local Government Journal,* 18 July 1896, p. 465.
87 Liégeois (1986), p. 134.
88 Strachey, 'The Gipsy scandal', p. 465. Strachey also made it clear that he thought the Gypsies described in the writings of George Borrow were 'creatures of his imagination' (p. 463).
89 Strachey, 'The Gipsy scandal', p. 462.
90 See *Dictionary of National Biography,* Vol. LIII, 1898, pp. 41–42; 'George Smith of Coalville', *The Graphic,* 24 May 1879, p. 499; W.H. Wiltshire, 'George Smith, of Coalville', *Biograph,* May 1879, pp. 316–328; Edwin Hodder, *George Smith (of Coalville): The Story of an Enthusiast* (London, 1896).
91 For example, see 'Gipsy and other travelling children', *Hand and Heart,* 11 June 1880, p. 584.
92 This section draws heavily from David Mayall, 'The Making of British Gypsy Identities, c.1500–1980', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 33–35; see also Mayall (1988), chapter 6, for a fuller discussion of George Smith and his work. Also see Hodder (1896). The dislike that Smith had for the lorists was returned by them with interest. Herbert Bathgate wrote to John Sampson in 1895: 'I am glad to see George Smith of Coalville is likely to die.' See letter from H.J.H.B. [Herbert Bathgate] to John Sampson, 11 May 1895. Gypsy Lore Society Archive, Special Collections, Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, C9 (24).
93 George Smith, 'Gipsy children's homes', *Hand and Heart,* 12 December 1879, p. 170.
94 George Smith, *I've Been a Gipsying. Or, Rambles among Our Gipsies and Their Children in Their Tents and Vans* (London, 1885), p. vii. Smith continued his attack on the romantic novelists in an article in *London Society* in 1885:

> The old romantic element of gipsy life left our shores with the cuckoo fifty years ago, to die without resurrection…. For some years the amorous, fascinating, clever novelists have tried their bewitching powers to woo back to our shores, and to heaven, as they think, the romantic gipsy life of bygone days, but without effect.
>
> (George Smith, 'Our Gipsies and their children', *London Society,* Vol. XLVII, 1885, p. 40)

See also *Gypsy Children; or, A Stroll in Gypsydom. With Songs and Stories* (London, [1889]), which is a shorter version of *I've Been a Gipsying*.

95 London, 1885.

96 *Illustrated London News,* 3 January 1880, p. 13.

97 Smith, *I've Been a Gipsying,* pp. 4, 34.

98 *Report of the Select Committee on the Temporary Dwellings Bill,* 1887, para. 365–488, pp. 22–28.

99 Hodder (1896), p. 240.

100 *Ibid.,* p. 93.

101 See *Report of the Select Committee on the Temporary Dwellings Bill,* 1887.

102 For example, see such publications as the *Sunday School Chronicle,* 19 December 1879, p. 640, and 'The present state of the Gypsies', *Sunday at Home,* 1884, pp. 118–120.

103 E.O. Winstedt, 'Gypsy civilisation', *JGLS,* New Series, Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1908, p. 344.

104 Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, a foundling* (London, 1749), Book XII, chapter XII; Bampfylde-Moore Carew, *An Apology for the Life of Bampfylde-Moore Carew, commonly known throughout the west of England, by the title of King of the Beggars, and Dog-Merchant General…the Whole taken from his own Mouth* (London, [1750?]).

105 Carew claims to have been elected their king, and the volume includes a section on gypsy laws and language, the latter described as 'nothing more than thieves' cant, drawn largely from Harman's Caveat and later coney-catching pamphlets'. John E. Tilford, 'The Gypsy in English literature', *Emory University Quarterly,* Vol. 11, No. 2, June 1946, p. 84. See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of early modern rogue literature.

106 Liégeois (1986), p. 141.

107 This approach can also be found in the work of Mariët Meester, a Dutch writer on Gypsies in Romania.

108

> In this book we therefore use a more general definition of Gypsies, i.e. those who lead an itinerant way of life and who are stigmatised as Gypsy or who have been given similar labels – In Great Britain: travellers, among others; in France: nomades, ambulants, bohémiens, romanichals; in Germany: Landfahrer and Jenischen; in Sweden: tattare; and in the Netherlands: Woonwagenbewoners'.
>
> (L. Lucassen, W. Willems and A. Cottaar, 'Introduction', in L. Lucassen, W. Willems and A. Cottaar, *Gypsies and other Itinerant Groups: A Socio-Historical Approach,* Basingstoke, 1998, p. 2)

109 Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar, 'Introduction', in Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998), p. 2.

110 *Ibid.,* p. 6.

111 See W. Willems, 'Ethnicity as a death-trap: the history of Gypsy studies', in Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998), pp. 17–34.

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114 See W. Willems and L. Lucassen, 'A silent war: foreign gypsies and Dutch government policy, 1969–89', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 11, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 81–101.
115 W. Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: Gypsies as Object of Study during the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Nazism* (London, 1997), p. 308. See also L. Lucassen, 'A blind spot: migratory and travelling groups in Western European historiography', in Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998), pp. 135–152. A modified version of this same article appeared in the *International Review of Social History,* 2 August 1993, pp. 209–235; L. Lucassen, 'The clink of the hammer was heard from daybreak till dawn: Gypsy occupations in Western Europe (nineteenth-twentieth centuries)', in Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998), pp. 153–173. A revised version of this article, 'Under the cloak of begging? Gypsy-occupations in Western-Europe in the 19th and 20th century', appeared in *Ethnologia Europeae. Journal of European Ethnology,* Vol. 23, 1993, pp. 75–94.
116 Willems (1997), p. 309.
117 Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar, 'Introduction', in Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998), p. 7.
118 *Ibid.*
119 Stevenson, 'On vagabonds', p. 711.
120 See *Llanelly Mercury,* 7 March 1912 and 14 March 1912; *Llanelly and County Guardian,* 7 March 1912.
121 Strachey, 'The Gipsy scandal', p. 462.
122 Printed notice ordering the apprehension of Gypsies and other vagrants, January 1799. East Sussex Record Office, 412/29/1.

10
So, who are the Gypsies?

The desire to classify, characterise and label satisfies a fundamental human need. Identifying 'others' not only forms part of the process of understanding 'others', and delineating and codifying responses, but also acts in the same way on self and those like self. The processes of defining, labelling and representing Gypsies are much the same as those involving any group, especially minority groups. The stereotypical descriptions adopt and adapt the language and concepts of any given period, and so reveal the nature and distribution of power in a society, and the influence of dominant ideologies and patterns of thought. Also, critically, the history of how Gypsies have been defined starkly highlights the consequences of identities being constructed and reproduced politically, culturally and linguistically. How they are built and what they contain have a key determining influence on responses. Our understanding of groups, and relations with others, is determined not only by what is known through direct, firsthand experience. It is also, crucially, shaped by what we think we know, derived from repeated images and impressions conveyed by language, pictures and words. Gypsies cross at least two mental maps: as foreigners or aliens, and as travellers or nomads. For outsiders, the greatest challenge has been to define the parameters of each of these defining characteristics and to establish the main criteria for identity. For the most part, when Gypsies settle, especially if they are not grouped together in established van towns, ghettos or distinct areas, they slip out of view.

Throughout this study it has been a feature of most of the sources surveyed that the representation of Gypsies has relied on generalisations about character and identity which are then applied to all the group. Again, this is by no means unique to Gypsies. However, with Gypsies this often took on exaggerated dimensions. Contrary evidence to previously formed and generalised opinions has often been ignored or dismissed, as seen in various court cases, Commissions of Enquiry and in individual attitudes. Evidence of features which did not match the stereotypes led commentators into contortions of explanation, often relying on notions of impurity and dilution.

But, still, we are left with the question 'Who are the gypsies?' Essentially this study has been leading to the conclusion that they are and have been whoever people have wanted them to be. They have been foreigners, nomads, and both a

racial and an ethnic group. In order to fully appreciate the complexities of each of these systems, or methods, of classification it has been necessary to return to their historical origins and subsequent reproduction. It has been shown that the race concept varied in its usage, with writers differing over what were seen as the inherited characteristics of the race, the nature of those characteristics themselves, and whether a positive or negative tone should be adopted. In this sense the race concept is both fluid and imprecise in its details. In many respects, and perhaps paradoxically, as the nineteenth century advanced, the concept became more rather than less crude, with the application of notions of blood purity, the influence of eugenicist thinking and an unwavering belief in inheritance over learning and acquired features. Writing on Gypsies in this period mirrored this development, and, for example, Heinrich Grellmann, the early Christian reformers and the later Gypsy lorists were all products of their time, limited by the then current thinking about the nature of difference between populations.

The idea of ethnicity first emerged as a challenge to racial classification and, as has been shown, suffers from a similar variation in its use and application. In attempting to distinguish between race and ethnicity a common approach is to suggest that the former is immutable, objective, biological and fixed, whereas ethnicity is mutable, subjective, cultural and fluid. Although this is an easy and convenient distinction, the concepts are not so readily separable, and despite the non-, or even anti-, racist origins of the concept of ethnicity, there can be little doubt that the two systems have continued to have a dual and overlapping life. The terms are often used synonymously, and the emphasis on biological characteristics in some ethnic definitions makes it impossible to separate the two, with the result that some versions of the ethnic Gypsy are little more than old racial, and racist, ideas in a more modern dress.

The complexities contained within these taxonomical systems are, inevitably, repeated in how Gypsies have been seen and portrayed. They have been the subject of romantic eulogies and the victims of the most abusive and negative criticism. The romanticists and social reformers could look at and meet the same people and come away with widely different views and images. A judge can hear evidence that leads to a particular understanding of the group but then dismiss it as he does not trust a witness statement that conflicts with his own preconceptions. When the lorists looked at the itinerant community they saw a population that could be stratified and arranged in a hierarchy based on origins and blood purity. When local authorities looked at the same community they saw only a group living a way of life that inevitably brought conflicts, strains and tensions. The idea of a hierarchy in which some were respectable and clean living and, usually, Christian, was a convenient notion to which they might pay lip-service. In practical terms, though, a nomad was a gypsy and, by definition, was a problem requiring remedy. Outsiders have thus constructed the group by imposing boundaries and affixing character more according to contemporary concerns and needs than to objective or empirical evidence, despite claims to the

contrary This, though, should not be taken to mean that the group identity is artificial and false, and there is a parallel here with nationalism and national identity. To argue that national identities are constructed is not to argue that they do not have real meaning and provide the basis of a distinct and powerful collective identity. The same is true for Gypsies as for any other group. Indeed the very construction of borders whether by geography, origin, physical or other features, can even provide the basis of identity building.

Identity is, then, complex and multifaceted, and groups as well as individuals can have multiple identities. It is normally assumed that ethnic or national identities are supreme, overcoming and overriding all others. But this is to ignore the complications which arise as a result of, for example, immigration. Identity is felt and experienced, but it is also given and constructed. It is formed and moulded by the group, but this is often set within the parameters provided by outsiders. Identities are also dependent on notions of a core or essence, often fixed and static, but which is also able to accommodate reformulation and change.

The history of how Gypsies have been defined and represented brings these many dimensions and problems to the fore. It has been shown that various definitions, with different criteria for inclusion and exclusion, have competed with each other over time. Outsiders fail to agree on every aspect of Gypsy identity: boundaries, labels and characteristics. Alternative representations therefore co-exist, partly as a result of their consolidation and reproduction in various official and non-official forms. The role of the state is of central importance as it sets the limits of official discourse about, and so of responses to, the group. The state gives institutional recognition, and so legitimacy, to a particular definition, and so also legitimises the resultant responses. Confusingly, the British state continues to operate with a definition of Gypsies as both nomads and an ethnic group, and this confusion is repeated elsewhere. The reasons for this have been shown to be based in the origins and history of each of the main representations of the group. It is difficult to see how this problem can be finally overcome as the range of alternative images are embedded in the politics and culture of British society. It seems, then, that the question ‘Who are the Gypsies?’ will continue to be asked and contested for some time yet.

Select bibliography and indicative guide to further reading

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